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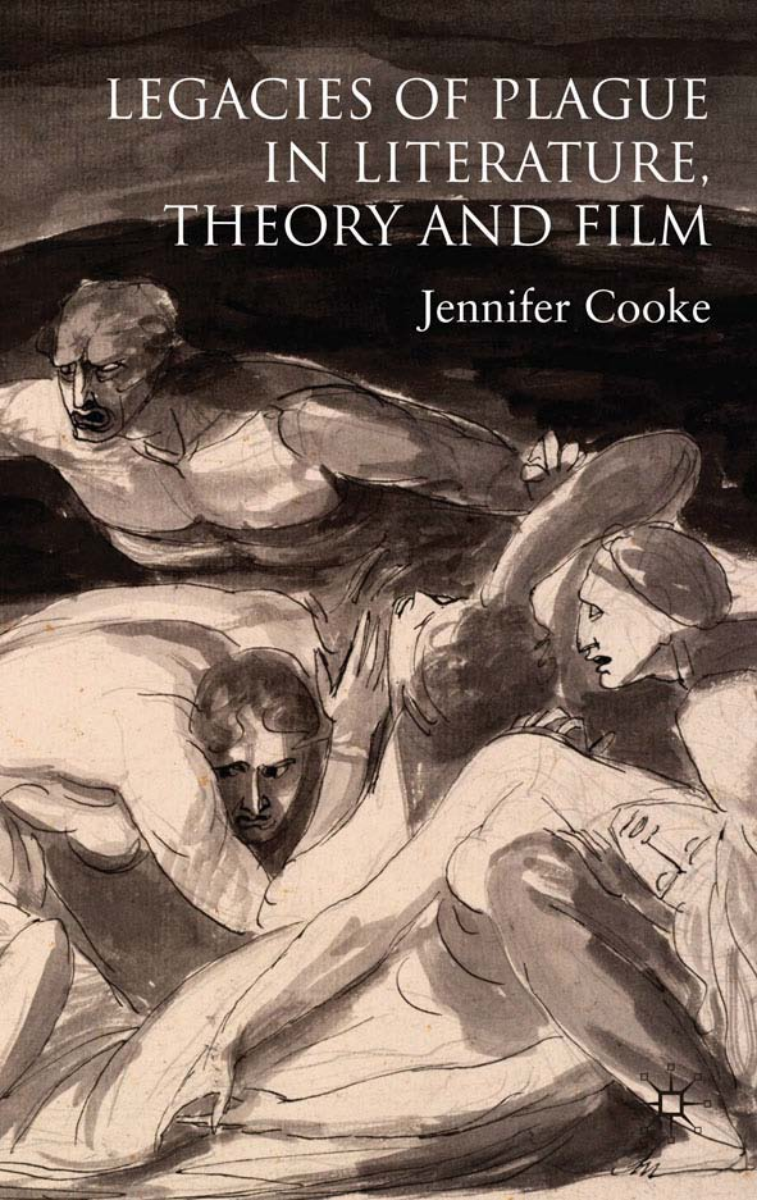
LEGACIES OF PLAGUE IN LITERATURE, THEORY AND FILM

Jennifer Cooke



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Jennifer Cooke

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Introduction

'But I ain't dead'

Plague is still with us. This is a medical fact: the disease which results from infection by the *Yersinia pestis* bacteria continues to sicken and to kill, especially in poor countries where medical supplies are sparse and antibiotics are unavailable or arrive too late.[1] Plague is endemic in the rat and rodent populations of certain regions; humans who come into contact with these animals remain at risk. *Legacies of Plague*, however, is not concerned with the medical reality of the disease but with its conceptual and symbolic continuation from the time of the final Western European outbreak in 1720 to the present day. The Marseilles outbreak of 1720 was widely feared and prompted Daniel Defoe to write *A Journal of the Plague Year* in 1722, even though it did not spread and, when it exhausted itself, plague epidemics disappeared for good. Although various medical and epidemiological theories have been advanced, there is still no conclusive explanation as to why plague never returned to Europe upon an epidemic scale after the French outbreak. This mysterious disappearance, plague's huge numbers of victims, coupled with the vivid imagery of buboes, burial-pits, death carts and houses shut up or marked with the cross of infection, have been held responsible for the grim grip plague has had upon our cultural imagination and for its continual linguistic deployment to name new 'scourges', from AIDS to smoking and, more recently, 'Islamofascism'.[2]

Disease is never merely medical and, as Susan Sontag has pointed out, contagion is not only literal.[3] Writing of plague and other epidemic diseases, she remarks how 'feelings about evil are projected onto a disease. And the disease (so enriched by meanings) is projected onto the world' (63). Plague infects its victim with more than just a bacillus and, as a disease which has outlived its epidemic threat, has since become a textual and metaphoric construction. Sontag's dual focus in

her study *Illness as Metaphor* is upon tuberculosis and cancer, diseases which she argues are perceived, however many victims they claim, to be visited upon the individual, in contrast to the way in which epidemics were experienced as community afflictions. The distinction is crucial and signals plague's social and therefore political dimension: as a disease besetting a whole town, province or area, it threatened the cohesion of the social bond and called for action and containment upon a mass scale, involving socio-medico-political, and therefore also ethical, decisions.

These threats, perceptions and necessities which plague created are still present in the disease's modern metaphorical usages: time and again, plague is wielded as a political or rhetorical weapon in the service of social discrimination or stigmatisation; it is mobilised to critique regimes, dictators or minority groups. Used in this way, plague is frequently accompanied by the powerful 'body metaphor', which renders a state, nation, or people the 'body' that can be labelled 'sick' or 'healthy', thus making it, with plague alongside, a convenient vector for political and social rhetoric. The body metaphor is so ubiquitous, so familiar, that its status as metaphor, and therefore as a linguistic construct, is often obscured and the lines between real sickness and metaphorical sickness blur. For example, appellations such as the 'gay plague' swiftly make the transition from being a euphemism for AIDS and the people it affects, to becoming a way of stigmatising the gay community. In fact, according to Michel Foucault, plague practices helped to form the way in which the medical profession constructs, distinguishes between and monitors health and illness. Foucault argues that the kind of containment practised during plague epidemics introduced a new drive towards the surveillance of people's health and sickness, a use of power with inclusive and epistemological, instead of exclusionary, aims.[4] Thus the fate of the leper, cast out of the community, was replaced by the containment of the plague victim, who was identified and duly quarantined, and whose sickness was measured according to rigorously organised systems of power and observation. These procedures, Foucault asserts, are the building blocks underlying our approach to health and illness today.[5]

Despite the practices which Foucault examines, the prehistory of plague and its later metaphorical deployment tend, as *Legacies of Plague* shows, to draw upon a different model, one closer to that brought to bear upon leprosy sufferers.[6] In times of plague, the ancient Greeks sacrificed a human *pharmakos*, who 'carried' the pollution of the disease outside the city boundaries and, through their death, was meant to secure the epidemic's cessation. The ritual and its impact upon later

plague uses are explored in detail in Chapter 3. This dramatic response survived to reappear in Hitler's accusations against and measures for dealing with the 'Jewish plague'. The structure of the ritual echoes in the way plague 'names' a group that is consequentially seen as a cause of pollution, the removal of which can be proposed as the desired end. Within these discourses, plague is used to identify, label and advocate the removal of a 'poisonous' or 'dangerous' outsider group, usually a minority believed to threaten (the 'health' of) society and whose extermination or containment is supposed to have a curative or restorative function. Although for some commentators plague is perceived as democratic insofar as it is capable of striking down the high or the low, rich or poor, sinner and saint, *Legacies of Plague* actually demonstrates that the disease is more often than not linked with practices that exclude certain groups from society and so is indicative of deliberately divisive forms of discourse, far from what we would consider the principles of democracy or egalitarianism.[7]

A 'normal' body implies a 'healthy' body; a plague-sickened body, society or text involves a thinking of the metaphorical attachments that are grafted within it or upon it. The embodiments of plague discussed in this study are varied; they include, for example, zombies, dictatorships and negative portrayals of the Jews. Plague is also a language effect and a structure of thinking; as such, it is deployed within and shapes discourses as diverse as political rhetoric and psychoanalytic theorising. The diffusion of plague metaphors is great indeed; even within the lexicon of disease, tuberculosis or syphilis – among others – are frequently labelled 'plagues'. Powerfully imbued with a linguistic infectiousness beyond its own set of associations, plague spreads to name a range of diseases and social ills, a practice beginning long ago when disease discrimination was more ambiguous, but which continues, ensuring that even today 'plague' remains a suitable designation for any threatening infectious epidemic.[8] Nevertheless, as Sontag's study and others have fruitfully explored, each disease has its own character, its own set of associative fears and figurations.[9] For the most part, therefore, *Legacies of Plague* confines itself to representations of infectious epidemics of bubonic plague, identifiable either through the symptoms described or the rituals, structures and history drawn upon in relation to the disease. This allows for the inclusion of fictional diseases which call themselves 'plagues', bear a resemblance in their effects and evoke the disease in deliberate ways, such as Karel Čapek's disease the White Plague, in the play of the same name. The notable exception to this limitation on discussing other disease 'scourges' is the case of AIDS, which is discussed

briefly in Chapter 2 as part of an exploration of plague's use in political theatre.

'Plague' is possibly the oldest name for epidemic disease on record. The Ancient Hebrew word for 'plague', noun and verb, is used repeatedly in the Old Testament and primarily means 'touch'.[10] Ancient Hebrew is pictographic; 'plague' is rendered with an eye ( ), a foot ( ) and a sprouting seed ( ), although since Hebrew is read right to left, this means the first letter is the seed, indicative of plague's disseminative properties. The detailed definition of the verb is 'to touch or strike; also, to bring a plague as a touch from God' and the noun, 'a plague or other sire or illness as a touch: plague, sore, stroke, stripe, stricken, wound' (374). The eye represents seeing, watching and knowledge; the foot stands for walking, carrying or gathering; and the sprouting seed signifies continuation, perpetuation, offspring or heir: the idea of passing on to a new generation.[11] Plague in Old Testament usage was a 'touch' from God, as is clear from the contexts of its appearances in Genesis, Exodus and Leviticus.[12] The English word 'plague' stems from the Latin, *plaga*, to strike or wound, while 'plague' in Latin is *pestis* and *pestilentia*, from where we get 'pestilence'.[13] Ancient Greek renders 'plague' as both *plege* and *loimos*, among others.[14] In all these antecedents, plague is an affliction; in the Bible it was frequently used to punish a people, as in the plagues of Egypt, and similarly, in Sophocles' plague tragedy *Oedipus the King*, it is plague which attacks the Thebans and results in the uncovering of Oedipus' true heritage and unwitting deeds. Even in 1722, Defoe is claiming that with plague '[God] had, as it were, his Sword drawn in his Hand, on purpose to take Vengeance, not on them only, but on the whole Nation' (69).

More recently, controversy has been provoked by new historical and epidemiological work which posits that the Black Death was not, as has commonly been believed, purely or mainly bubonic but was instead a manifestation of other forms of plague bacilli or entirely different infectious 'plagues'.[15] While interesting and sometimes enriching, these debates do not alter the approach taken by *Legacies of Plague*. What remains important is plague's position within cultural memory and its popular, artistic and theoretical representations, not the specificity of past misdiagnoses. *Legacies of Plague* is particularly attentive to how new associations with plague have been forged within twentieth-century and twenty-first-century texts and discourses, while acknowledging and exploring how they often draw upon the existent associations which have historically been attributed to and carried by the disease, such as the perception that its presence is a form of divine judgement. More often

than not, new deployments of plague rely upon the heritage of past plague associations: for example, the condemnation of fascism as plague discussed in Chapters 2 and 5 revives the older belief in the disease as punitive, while Hitler's use of plague to name and blame the Jews clearly has echoes of the way in which the Greeks made use of the *pharmakos*.

Structurally, metaphor is a figure of speech that implies contagion: the two concepts metaphor brings together are no longer discrete but mutually infect one another. As summarised by Paul de Man, from Aristotle to the present, metaphor has entailed a conceptualisation 'conceived as an exchange or substitution of properties on the basis of resemblance'.[16] In texts which use plague as a metaphor, the point of resemblance which de Man refers to is usually concentrated upon issues of infection, contamination, dissemination and containment, as well as more anarchic reactions to plague, which include bacchanalia, the breakdown of law and order, and the lurking presence of the irrational. The move from the literal into the figurative that metaphor constitutes is an action of carrying over, passing on: for example, the social disorder that results from plague can become a plague itself. In his book *Dissemination*, the French philosopher Jacques Derrida has highlighted this carrying over which occurs in metaphorisation. He identifies its presence in Plato's use of the word *pharmakon* (drug or poison) to name and relegate writing in comparison to living speech. In exploring Plato's metaphor, Derrida concludes that '[m]etaphoricity is the logic of contamination and the contamination of logic'.[17] Metaphor plagues logic with its mixing, its disordering; metaphor's own logic is one of dissemination, which infects and disorders the specificity of definition. If many deployments of metaphor veil the structurally inherent contamination upon which they rest, plague quite obviously cannot. Discussing Derrida's argument in the context of AIDS rhetoric, Lee Edelman develops the 'germ' of a thought that 'Disease = Discourse':

> Bearing in mind that Derrida's reading of the *pharmakon* explicitly invokes the critical conjunction of discourse and biology informing the platonic opposition between writing as supplement and speech as living word, his gloss suggests that defensive strategies deployed – in the realm of discourse or disease – to combat agencies of virulence may themselves be informed by the virulence they are seeking to efface, informed by it in ways that do not produce the immunizing effect of a vaccine, but that serve, instead, to reinforce and even multiply the dangerous sites of infection.[18]

The name given to this reciprocal infection of not just discourses but also states, politics and institutions in later Derridean writings is

'autoimmunity' and *Legacies of Plague* discusses this in particular in Chapter 5, with reference to plague's deployment in political discourse. Edelman's article seeks to examine and challenge some of the slogans that had become attached to the AIDS awareness and gay rights campaigns, yet in a more generalised context his argument highlights how within disease discourses the assumed distinctions between pure/impure, healthy/diseased, uninfected/infectious, poison/cure are often unstable, mutually infecting terms which bleed into one another and defy simple dichotomisation.

Plague thinking and plague writing therefore entail an examination and, quite often, a crossing or blurring of boundaries. In *The Writing of the Disaster*, Derrida's contemporary Maurice Blanchot notes how cancer inherits and continues the plague legacy: '[cancer/plague] is a political phenomenon, one of the rare ways to dislocate the system, to disarticulate, through proliferation and disorder, the universal programming and signifying power'.[19] While it is true that plague is a disruptive force, the response to plague is usually to try to re-establish order by segregating, by issuing edicts which curtail the ordinary rights of the individual and by producing discourses which attempt to explain the disease and account for its affliction. A proliferation of diseased disorder and social chaos breeds a proliferation of tyrannical measures of control and totalising discourses of disease cause or cure. This is what Defoe's *A Journal of the Plague Year* (1722) and *The Plague* (1947) by Albert Camus portray; it is also an aspect of Karel Čapek's *The White Plague* (1937) and Camus's play *State of Siege* (1948). Both Čapek and Camus use plague and the measures it produces as an analogy for the effects of fascism and military dictatorship. Not all plague writers stress this aspect of the disease, however; Antonin Artaud, in his 1933 essay upon theatre and plague, in *Theatre and Its Double* celebrates the liberating disorder and the anarchic, subconscious release the disease facilitates. These two responses, the military and the anarchic, draw upon the spectacle inherent in plague which is discussed in Chapter 2.

Academic work on plague consists in the main of historical accounts of specific plague outbreaks or scientific and social science orientated examinations of plague and other epidemic diseases. Many of these contain essential factual and medical information but they are not particularly concerned with plague's symbolic role. Margaret Healy's excellent study, *Fictions of Disease in Early Modern England: Bodies, Plagues and Politics* (2001), addresses this lacuna for the early modern period and works as a useful historical preface to *Legacies of Plague*. Healy considers the effects of plague upon its victims but crucially 'foregrounds

the socio-culturally constructed nature of explanations of disease, and literature's important participation in that process' (2). She contextualises and investigates plague accounts of the period, drawing upon pamphlets, historical and medical documents, sermons and poems to provide a rich examination of how plague functioned and what it represented across a range of disparate discourses. Healy's close reading of plague tracts reveals that the disease was enmeshed in a complex array of metaphorical associations, many of which are resurrected in the much later plague representations I examine. In a period when religious convictions carried political implications, *Fictions of Disease* outlines the way in which plague circulated as a trope among pro- and anti-Reformists, both claiming God to be upon their side. Plague was routinely depicted as God's punishment but this could be for multiple reasons which tended to shift with the economic, political and religious preoccupations of the time and the author. As 'warnings to be ware', plague tracts linked pestilence to war and famine; to the greed of the rich and their exclusionary measures which disproportionately disadvantaged the poor; to sinfulness; to religious factions; to civil unrest; and to the filth of London's liberties.[20] Even such a summary list gives an indication of the potential contradictions in plague rhetoric: in some manifestations, the rich are responsible for plague or its spread, due to their greed and lack of charity; in others, the poor, for their dirtiness and sinful behaviour.

What emerges is a picture of plague as a rhetorical tool with which to criticise enemies, antagonists and minorities, and to apportion blame. Healy notes too that this can result in the scapegoating of particular groups, as happened to the Jews. These are aspects of plague which have survived and continued into the twentieth-century and beyond: while political and religious positions have altered, the need to find a portion of society to blame for socio-economic and political problems has remained the same and the metaphor of plague has often been reached for at such points. Thus, as Healy observes, 'plague writings inscribe social tensions' (63), and:

> [p]lague thus comes to represent the ultimate horror, that of both individual and social disintegration: only those two competing scourges, famine and war, match its effects. Ideas about social decay, disorder and instability are thus encoded in the word 'plague'.
>
> (62)

At the same time as encoding social disintegration, plague was often personified as a 'militaristic tyrant' (62), a representation that is revivified by Čapek and Camus in their plague plays against fascism. Healy's

sensitivity to the constructed nature of plague, even at a time when it was a palpable threat, has informed my own approach, and her detailed attention to its powerful metaphoric role in early modern discourse provides an essential genealogy for the disease.

The way in which plague has been written about in the twentieth century indicates the shifting parameters of how it has been interpreted and understood, providing a guide to its role within literature and the work of cultural and critical theorists. David Steel's 1981 essay, 'Plague Writing: From Boccaccio to Camus' establishes the existence of a literary plague canon by providing an invaluable overview of authors who have drawn upon plague, confirming that the disease had a significant impact upon writers who took up the pen well after the medical threat had receded. Steel notes that in the past 'the idea of plague seems to have been as powerful as the disease was virulent'; so much so in fact that 'despite the rarity of outbreaks today contemporary literature bears witness to the continuing vitality of its symbolic possibilities'.[21] Tracing the plague tradition as it develops in Western literature, Steel notes writers well known for their plague depictions – Boccaccio, Defoe, Edgar Allan Poe, Artaud and Camus – but he additionally pauses over those whose plague works have attracted less attention, such as Francesco Berni, John Wilson, Alessandro Manzoni, Harrison Ainsworth, Adalbert Stifter and Hermann Hesse. Steel is not attempting to theorise plague nor does he detail the individual resonance of these different depictions, but the essay importantly recognises that there is 'a curious parallel between the transmission of a virus by a carrying agent into a receptive area and the communication of an idea, orally or in writing, into a favourable cultural milieu' (106). Before Steel's article, Raymond Crawfurd's *Plague and Pestilence in Literature and Art* (1914) was the only twentieth-century study of the disease's cultural impact; its focus is the early Biblical, Greek and Roman accounts of pestilence, and the art inspired by these and the Black Death.

A very different approach and understanding of literary plague texts is presented by Barbara Fass Leavy's *To Blight With Plague: Studies in a Literary Theme* (1992). She reads familiar, canonical plague texts: Boccaccio's *Decameron*, Chaucer's 'The Pardoner's Tale', Defoe's *A Journal of the Plague Year*, Poe's 'The Masque of the Red Death' and Camus's *The Plague*, although she also includes chapters on texts which feature different diseases, stating that she has 'taken the authors at their own word when they use the word *plague*'.[22] Despite the varied diseases and the inevitably different contexts and mythologies they carry with them, Fass Leavy identifies the theme of the Edenic Fall as common

to most of the texts she reads; for her, plague literature 'is replete with bowers of bliss and false paradises' (17). She supports her argument with Boccaccio's Arcadian settings for the brigada's tale-telling and the supposedly impregnable fortress retreated to by Poe's Prospero in 'The Masque of the Red Death'. Yet, while these can be seen as temporary and illusionary paradises from plague, in most of the texts which *Legacies of Plague* examines the Edenic theme is by no means a prevalent one; if anything, the reverse is true and plague becomes associated with ugly and often militaristic dystopias. Fass Leavy's preoccupations are very different to those under consideration in *Legacies of Plague*, and her focus is primarily literary:

> Ironically, both Boccaccio, who starts from the premise of the writer as moral instructor, and Poe, who denounces that premise, use the plague motif to call into question the significance of art in a mortal world. A reading of their works reveals something paradoxical, even self-cancelling, in the whole idea of plague literature, which strains to breaking point the tension between the instructive and the self-expressive in art. How can the subject of pestilence be consistent with the pleasure principle that separates literary art from rhetoric? Is plague itself – as subject – a bridge between the artist's moral and creative self?
>
> (20)

These enquiries are concerned with literature's aesthetic dimensions, with the role of the artist and the function of their art. They fail to address the significance of the political paradigm. Many of the texts I discuss use plague rhetorically to make a political point, thereby interfusing the literary and the rhetorical. The question, then, is not one of the extent of separation or the consistency of aims which Fass Leavy pinpoints; it is instead a question of effect and impact within a specific historical and political circumstance. To align the pleasure principle with literary art, as Fass Leavy does, is to assume a simple relationship between literature and pleasure that does not take account of the fascination inherent in spectacle, disgust and horror, or the potential pleasures to be derived from rhetoric. The figure of the writer is not extraneous to examinations of plague, but the writing of plague is always inextricably linked to questions of language and the social and political domains in which that language operates.

For Elana Gomel, plague narratives have a very different set of characteristics to those sketched by Fass Leavy. In her essay 'The Plague of Utopias: Pestilence and the Apocalyptic Body', Gomel posits that

plague narratives fall into two types, apocalyptic and postapocalyptic. The former is notable for its millennial preoccupations and for the way in which plague becomes figured as a 'final solution' which facilitates a genocidal cleansing before utopia can be ushered in.[23] Gomel rightly locates the roots of this in the Nazi and eugenicist rhetoric prevailing in the first half of the twentieth century; its plague narratives tend to be within the science fiction genre, set in the future, and they draw upon developments in nano- or gene technology to create fictional uber-disease pandemics. Such texts express a chiliasm orientated towards the cleansing of society through disease in order to facilitate a 'glorious rebirth' (408). The texts examined in *Legacies of Plague* lack the eugenicist optimism inherent in such millennial visions because they are mostly the product of European writers in the mid to late 1920s, the 1930s and 1940s, a time period marked by the rise of National Socialism and other fascisms. Although some of the disease narratives drawn upon here imagine alternate realities and are set in fictional, nightmarish worlds, they are attempts to refute and depict the menace of the new political and social conditions prevalent at the time of writing. Hence, the majority of *Legacies of Plague*'s texts fit into Gomel's postapocalyptic typology. These are said to feature 'protracted dying, narrative entropy, and interminable duration' characterised by what she terms, following James Berger's definition, 'aftermaths and remainders' (408). Examples would be Defoe's *Journal*, Camus's *The Plague*, Mary Shelley's *The Last Man*, the political theatre discussed in Chapter 2, and the zombie films of Chapter 7. Alongside Healy, Gomel affirms the importance of the 'contagious body' as 'a locus of political struggle' (409); her discussion of the voice of the plague witness is drawn upon in Chapter 1.

Like Gomel, who identifies the phenomenon in Hitler's anti-Semitic rhetoric, one of the earliest theorist of plague texts, René Girard, is keenly conscious of the way in which the cause of plague can also be figured as the cure, which he discusses in his early essay 'The Plague in Literature and Myth (1973–4). Girard's focus is on violence. Attentive to what Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* can teach us, he argues that plague is always accompanied by a 'thematic cluster' comprised of 'epidemic contagion, the dissolving of differences' and 'mimetic *doubles*', as well as featuring a 'sacrificial element'.[24] All four elements are forms of crisis for the social bond, threatening the boundaries, hierarchies and differences that ensure stability within societies. While I would not go so far as Girard in stating that all plague texts exhibit this quartet of traits – a clearly identifiable scapegoat or a playing out of mimetic

doubles is absent, for example, from Defoe's *Journal* – they certainly feature, whether singly or in combination, in many representations of plague, as Girard amply demonstrates through reference to Shakespeare, Artaud, Dostoevsky and others. The reading Girard gives of plague and *Oedipus the King* is fleshed out in more depth in his book *The Scapegoat* and is, along with the article, discussed in detail in Chapter 3 of *Legacies of Plague*. The great value of Girard's work on plague lies in his recognition of its metaphorical import; his stress upon how plague texts revolve around or stage social tensions and crises; and his identification of the role of plague in ritual and myth. Even though plague eventually comes to be another feature of his larger thesis about the violence inherent in human societies, he was the first to bring a theoretical dimension to discussions of plague and demonstrates the 'incredible vitality' of plague's legacies and their contemporary relevance:

> Earlier, I said that the plague, as a literary theme, is still alive today, in a world less and less threatened by real bacterial epidemics. This fact looks less surprising now, as we come to realise that the properly medical aspects of the disease never were essential; in themselves, they always played a minor role, serving mostly as a disguise for an even more terrible threat that no science has ever been able to conquer [the dissolution of the social bond]. The threat is still very much with us, and it would be a mistake to consider the presence of the plague in our literature as a matter of formal routine … its relevance to our current psychosociological predicament becomes evident as soon as specific examples are produced.
>
> (845)

Girard's perception of the contemporary relevance of plague is confirmed by what follows in *Legacies of Plague*. However, the medical aspects of the disease are not as minor as he represents: the symptoms of plague, its buboes and the imagery it carries with it, are an intrinsic part of the disease's specificity and horror. *Legacies of Plague* explores how the distinct medical, social and metaphoric roles that the disease fulfils have their roots, as Girard argues, in ancient rituals and practices. These survived to be remolded by medieval associations and early modern fears, and then to be reinvented within more recent embodiments and uses of plague.

Legacies of Plague specifically examines three areas: literature, theory and film. Its chapters are ordered to reflect this, although due to plague's infectiousness, names circulate repeatedly and themes recur in differing guises. Chapter 1 explores literary narratives and plague

through a discussion of the well known plague texts, Daniel Defoe's *A Journal of the Plague Year* and Albert Camus's *The Plague*. Just as plague inscribes itself upon the body of its victims, it produces textual, thematic and stylistic symptoms upon an author's corpus. Despite the deaths plague texts inevitably recount, there is a surprising creativity bequeathed by the disease to the writer. Plague's relationship with language and its creative possibilities is addressed; so too is the plague witness, the one who survives to tell the tale. Resultantly, Chapter 1 encompasses an examination of how Defoe and Camus both intervene in history through their fictions. Due to the nature of plague, its symptoms, victims, necessities and the exigencies it creates, there are shared affinities within plague narratives and shared challenges for the plague writer. This is also true for the playwrights discussed in Chapter 2, which explores the theatricality and spectacle of plague plays and Antonin Artaud's theatre theorisation of plague. Moving from the notable absence of plague on the Elizabethan stage, when the disease was prevalent, and finishing with the AIDS plays of the 1980s, the chapter is interested primarily in the way plague has been used by twentieth-century playwrights to effect political and social change. The anti-fascist plague plays of Albert Camus and Karel Čapek inform the central consideration of the chapter, as well as Artaud's conception of how plague can radically reinvigorate theatre. All three twentieth-century playwrights were living under the shadow of emergent fascism and their work has transparent political dimensions.

Chapters 3–5 address plague and theory, with psychoanalysis occupying a rather special position. Firstly, and as outlined in detail in Chapter 3, this is due to the importance Sigmund Freud accorded to Sophocles' plague tragedy, *Oedipus the King*. In the play, Oedipus fulfils the role of the ancient Greek plague victim, the *pharmakos*, which emerges as a significant and powerful legacy resonating throughout this and other chapters. As is well known, Oedipus lends his name to the central psychoanalytic theory, the Oedipus complex, which Freud initially identifies as structuring the interpersonal attachments of childhood and later widens to account for societal development. In the play, Oedipus is responsible for plague's presence in Thebes; his removal is supposed to ensure it ceases. Through an examination of its reception and the questions of later critics, Chapter 3 outlines how the same position can be attributed to the role of the Oedipus complex in the Freudian oeuvre: it at once describes the genesis of sickness and the pathways to its cure. Broached in Chapter 3, and developed more fully in Chapter 4, is an exploration of the 'infectious' spread of 'the psychoanalytic plague'

in its impact upon the world of psychology and science, and also in the development of its therapeutic practices and structures. Concepts like analysand resistance and transference provide a totalising theory of the way in which a patient is unable to react to psychoanalysis without already conforming to its prescriptions, without already being contaminated by its logic. Furthermore, in its attention to the death drive, to the power of dreams (which Artaud links to plague infection) and in its later adoption by film theorists, psychoanalysis concerns itself with many of the issues raised by and within plague texts.[25] Chapter 4 stays with psychoanalysis to investigate a curious proposition of Artaud's in 'Theatre and the Plague' that the disease could be a psychic entity and capable of being psychically transmitted. Concentrating upon a key phenomenon, transference, I undertake a close reading of one of Freud's dreams, from *The Interpretation of Dreams*, named the Three Fates by editor James Strachey. The dream weaves a complex set of associations which circulate contagiously around fears about the future, plagiarism, scenes of knowledge acquisition and impartation, and an admission by Freud that he is plagued by desires. The chapter follows these rather elliptical symptoms to disclose a contiguity between the concerns raised by the dream's plaguing associations and the very practices of psychoanalysis and its teaching.

An echo of the *pharmakos* mechanism can be identified at work within Hitler's anti-Semitism: the Jews were depicted as the scourge of German Aryanism and their removal proposed as the cure. Chapter 5 examines the relationship between plague and anti-Semitism in fascist rhetoric, following closely the analogies of Hitler and examining the Nazi propaganda film *Der ewige Jude*. In opposition to this rhetoric is the anti-fascist critique of Wilhelm Reich, who labelled and theorised fascism as an 'emotional plague', but in whose later writings plague slowly widens to name the behaviour of Jewish psychoanalysts with whom Reich once worked. The way in which psychoanalysis dealt with its Jewish constitution in the face of increasing anti-Semitism is another redeployment of plague, demonstrating how it circulates between and within these discourses in curious ways which are not so simple as to be assimilated under the attack and counterattack formula of typical politicking. René Girard's work on the community in *Violence and the Sacred* is read alongside Jacques Derrida's conceptualisation of autoimmunity to provide a framework for understanding the motility of plague across discourses that are often directly working against each other. The result is still pertinent to political discourses and institutions today.

The final two chapters are dedicated to film and plague. Chapter 6 provides a close reading of Lars von Trier's little-known film, *Epidemic* (1988), a movie about making a movie about plague. *Epidemic* features a scene of hypnosis wherein the hypnotised subject contracts plague from within the hypnotic state. Hypnosis and the suggestion which it entails is a model of infection between hypnotist and subject or, as in von Trier's film, between a film script about plague and the hypnotised subject who has read the script. *Epidemic* figures plague as capable of being passed from hypnotised subject to viewer of the hypnotic spectacle, and from film to spectator. The implications of this are traced with reference to the early history of film reception, which was very conscious of the possibilities and ramifications of film's suggestibility and of the potentially hypnotic state it could induce. The role of the internal screen, upon which a hypnotised subject plays out what they are seeing, has a pivotal reciprocity with the cinema screen. All this constitutes a theoretical framework through which Chapter 7 approaches the zombie genre, from George A. Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* (1968) up to the recent Bruce LaBruce film *Otto; or Up with Dead People* (2008). Early zombie films made the connection between zombification and hypnosis but it was Romero who added plague by making zombies capable of infecting the living. Tracing a genealogy of the zombie movie, Chapter 7 investigates how the infectious undead, a contagious plague, get closer and closer to their human counterparts, raising suggestions about what the zombie genre is enacting in terms of the depiction of human fears of contagion, death and the group relation.

Legacies of Plague is, I believe, the first study to bring together and discuss the impact of post-outbreak plague representations across a range of cultural discourses, including literature, drama, psychoanalysis, political rhetoric and film. Plague's legacies lie in all these areas: in our dreams, our fears and in language itself. They reveal the fragility of the social bond, the fascination of diseased spectacle and the literal and metaphorical power of pestilence. They highlight, too, the way in which structures of ritual surrounding the contagious and the taboo, while they may have been practically supplanted, are still operative under new guises in discourse. A legacy cannot be chosen; it exists, there to be used or not. The one who draws upon it, passes it on to others. Like plague, legacies have disseminative properties and they spread contagiously, as this study shows, throughout different discourses and art forms, with little regard for the boundaries which might ordinarily separate domains. As is shown with plague, legacies can accumulate different meanings and resonances depending upon how they are used

and in which historical time periods. Here is one such legacy: a figure in plague literature who recurs. Defoe used him, but the story has older roots; he was momentarily revived in the 1975 film *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*. He is comedic but also the voice of the dead undead: the piper who, found drunk and taken for a corpse, is piled into the death cart and nearly catapulted into the plague pit. Upon the brink of this fate he awakens and objects to his shocked pall bearers, '[b]ut I an't dead'.[26] With a similar refrain, in all its embodiments and figurations in the pages to follow, plague continues to insist.

1
Writing Plague: Defoe and Camus

> Infection in the sentence breeds.
>
> Emily Dickinson[1]

> By their symptoms you shall know them.
>
> William Burroughs[2]

Ever since 1720, when Western Europe's last plague epidemic died out, plague's place has been in fiction, with authors reworking and reimagining its outbreaks in their narratives and novels. Two of the most well known and, therefore, influential plague texts are Daniel Defoe's *A Journal of the Plague Year*, published just two years after the 1720 outbreak in France, and Albert Camus's novel *The Plague*, which appeared two years after the end of the Second World War. Clearly, both authors were responding to the calamity: Defoe and his contemporary readers, alarmed by the French epidemic, had no way of knowing that the disease would not shortly – or ever – repeat its devastating English outbreak of 1665; Camus, a member of the French resistance, was reacting to the horror of Nazi occupation and the staggering events and loss of lives Europe had suffered. Camus's twentieth-century plague aligns, too, with other thinkers and writers of the 1930s and 1940s who used plague to criticise fascism and dictatorships. Camus admired Defoe: similarities between their texts go far beyond the fact that both feature plague. What plague pushes Camus and Defoe towards, the exigencies it creates for its writers, the surprising creativity it enables and the uniqueness of some of its textual effects are the focus here. It becomes evident that plague's symptoms are not just written *about* in these narratives but are written *into* them. *A Journal of the Plague Year* and *The Plague* are preoccupied by their respective recent histories: they are concerned with loss and

what this demands in terms of memory and memorialisation; they are forms of narrative witnessing which play upon and blur the usually strict boundaries that divide history from fiction. The position and significance of the plague witness in Defoe and Camus open possibilities for thinking about how fiction might contribute towards our understanding of history and also what delimitations structure such a relation. These plague texts provocatively suggest that fiction may be in a privileged position to address the trauma of enormous death counts, of fear of infection resulting from epidemic outbreaks and possibly even – hence rendering them still contemporarily relevant – other analogous historical events of mass destruction and imperilment of human life.

There are congruities between *The Plague* and its predecessor, as well as between the personal responses of the authors to their pestilential material, which indicate the creative potential plague carries for the narratives it engenders. These plague texts demonstrate how the symptoms of the disease can show themselves in the actual writing itself, in the stylistic and structural corpus of the texts. Famously, Boccaccio used plague as the reason and stimulus behind the Brigata's multiplication of narratives in the *Decameron* (1349–52), prompting David Steel to comment that 'the age of modern fiction was ushered in by a virus'.[3] Plague, as Defoe and Camus further demonstrate, does not terminate narrative possibilities but instead, seemingly paradoxically, produces plenitude: multiple deaths and the disease's inexplicability generate increasing numbers of individual stories to participate in and augment the overall plague account.

Defoe's *A Journal of the Plague Year* is a fictional account of a historical occurrence, claiming, as it does, to be an eyewitness report of the happenings in London during 1665, the year of England's last epidemic plague outbreak. The narrator – identifying himself only as H. F. – describes his employment as a 'saddler' and, while his brother flees the infested capital, for a mixture of personal, business and religious reasons, he decides to stay.[4] The account is purportedly the result of his 'Memorandums', observations and opinions recorded throughout the plague (76). At the beginning of *A Journal of the Plague Year*, veracity is lent by the inclusion of Bills of Mortality and the Lord Mayor's Orders. In his first-person testimony, H. F. describes and criticises the authorities' measures to contain the disease through quarantine; he details the disposal of the dead; lists the palliatives invested in; and he notes the attitudes, religious or otherwise, which people have towards the outbreak and towards each other. Endearing these stricken Londoners to his readers, Defoe includes many tales of individual fates, escapes and tragedies,

and, at one stage, shows H. F. forced to accept a brief and unpleasant job as an Examiner of Houses. Defoe's legacy clearly left its mark upon Camus, whose fictional plague breaks out during the troubled decade of the 1940s in French Algeria. Oran, situated on the coastline, experiences a disturbing epidemic of rat deaths and it is not long before the human population is dying as rapidly as the rodents. The authorities, initially reluctant, are forced to quarantine the town by closing the gates. Everyone inside Oran at the time, citizen or not, is trapped. Dr Bernard Rieux, who was one of the few in the medical community to advise immediate and drastic action, becomes the head of a constellation of men that coalesces into 'health teams' to fight plague by assisting the medical staff and implementing preventative measures among the townspeople. These are *The Plague*'s central characters: the doctor, the priest Paneloux, the Parisian journalist Rambert, the civil servant Joseph Grand and the enigmatic figure of Jean Tarrou. As the death toll rises, these five people feel the strain of fighting a disease resembling a 'shrewdly designed and flawless system, which operated with great efficiency' (138).[5] Unlike *A Journal of the Plague Year*, however, *The Plague* disguises the fact that it is an eyewitness account through the ruse, only revealed as such in the final pages, of a third-person narrative voice. Both authors thus describe the institutional, medical, religious, social, public and private responses to plague and how these alter over the period of the epidemic, as well as detailing the various symptoms of the disease.

Plague takes different forms: bubonic, septicaemic and pneumonic are the most common types and they all have distinct symptoms, incubation periods and routes of transmission. Narrative aspects of *A Journal of the Plague Year* and *The Plague* have a surprising affinity with the symptoms produced by the various plague strains; the way the disease affects bodies is, indeed, suggestive of new approaches to reading texts. There is a logic of contamination at work between plague and the narratives that tell of it. For instance, the role of the parasitic flea in plague outbreaks has as its textual corollary a tendency among plague writers to parasitise one another; the blood coagulation suffered by the victim of septicaemic plague suggests the paralysis of words suffered when afflicted by writer's block, a condition that beleaguered Camus and one of *The Plague*'s characters. My reading thus treats the body of the plague sufferer as a text, and the text as a body wherein symptoms of plague can also inscribe themselves, offering themselves up to be read. Defoe's and Camus's writing of plague is reciprocally plagued by questions of writing: plague induces anxiety about how to write and how to tell,

how to bear witness to the effects of such a disease and the numerous and gruesome deaths it causes. Each author writes plague by allowing features of the disease to infect their writing. Accordingly, I begin by following the plague types, allowing the disease and its specificities to determine the examination of Defoe and Camus and how plague marks their texts. Plague types and the writing they produce involve considerations of writerly plague parasitism, a feature of the disease in its routes of infection which lead from the rat to the parasitic flea and only then to the human. Finally, I discuss the position of the plague witness, the one who recounts plague, and how they are situated in relation to history and fiction.

Writing plague symptoms

Buboes are what make plague famous: the enlarged lymph glands, in those most intimate and sensuous of areas, the neck, the armpit and the groin, are what distinguish the disease so gruesomely. Buboes force the victim into crooked, misshapen stances to relieve the pressure and lessen the pain: the legs are splayed, the arms uplifted, the head turned away to one side. Protruding unmistakably, they declare the disease of the sufferer to be written on the body, there for all to read. To look at and touch, the bubo is a hard knot which can vary in size from a nut to an orange, sometimes blackening, sometimes breaking and suppurating noxious pus. Buboes cannot be removed, they are an inflamed part of the body, but they can sometimes be lacerated. This was a common practice in 1665 because a broken bubo was thought to betoken a possible recovery. Here is Defoe's description of the suffering caused by these diseased growths:

> [T]he swellings which were generally in the Neck, or Groin, when they grew hard, and would not break, grew so painful, that it was equal to the most exquisite Torture; and some not able to bear the Torment, threw themselves out at Windows, or shot themselves, or otherwise made themselves away, and I saw several dismal Objects of that Kind: Others unable to contain themselves, vented their Pain by incessant Roarings, and such loud and lamentable Cries.
>
> (76)

'Exquisite' – exact, precise, perfect at hitting the mark – pain, like food, can have a certain delicacy and purity. The descriptions provided by H. F. have a noisy physicality which echoes through the excerpt above.

Raymond Stephenson argues that such portrayals are a consciously developed literary technique by Defoe for specifically stimulating the visual and aural imagination of his eighteenth-century readers, rather than appealing to their intellect. Indeed, the London of H. F. resounds to 'screeching and crying' (56), 'the shriecks of Women and Children' (16), 'grievous Cries and Lamentations' (153) and 'People raving and distracted' (226) throughout. Stephenson believes this cacophony, coupled with the continual presentation of grotesque images, is intended 'to create a picture of physical mutilation and corruption which will horrify and disgust the reader with its references to partially decayed human flesh, pain, agony, and running sores'.[6] Episode by grisly, clamorous episode, Defoe builds a London in which the sounds, the fetor and the symptoms of disease rise tangibly through his writing.

Bubonic plague is not characterised by buboes alone: the body's attempt to flush out bacteria gathering in the lymph glands naturally results in a high-running fever. This medical fact is incorporated by both Defoe and Camus, the former referring often to the 'Rage of the Distemper' (81) which afflicted London sufferers and the latter making the fight of two closely followed deaths – those of Jean Tarrou and the young son of Othon, the magistrate – centre upon their struggle against a rising temperature as opposed to the pain and disfigurement caused by the buboes themselves. The fever of Defoe's characters, for instance, is apparent in the agitation and restlessness of the prose. In the following episode recounted by H. F., a typically nameless man has his whole story given in one long and breathless sentence, the high-running fever literalised in his delirious, repetitive running amok and the rising tide-waters of the river Thames:

> I heard of one infected Creature, who running out of his Bed in his Shirt, in the anguish and agony of his Swellings, of which he had three upon him, got his Shoes on and went to put on his Coat, but the Nurse resisting and snatching the Coat from him, he threw her down, run over her, run down Stairs and into the Street directly to the *Thames* in his Shirt, the Nurse running after him, and calling to the Watch to stop him; but the Watchmen frightened at the Man, and afraid to touch him, let him go on; upon which he ran down to the Still-yard Stairs, threw away his Shirt, and plung'd into the *Thames*, and, being a good swimmer, swam quite over the River; and the Tide being coming in, as they call it, that is running West-ward, he reached the Land not till he came about Falcon Stairs, where landing, and finding no People there, it being in the Night, he ran about

> the Streets there, Naked as he was, for a good while, when it being by that time High-water, he takes the River again, and swam back to the Still-yard, landed, ran up the Streets again to his own House, knocking at the Door, went up the Stairs, and into his Bed again; and that this terrible Experiment cur'd him of the Plague, that is to say, that the violent Motions of his Arms and Legs stretch'd the Parts where the Swellings he had upon him were, that is to say under his Arms and his Groin, and caused them to ripen and break; and that the cold of the Water abated the Fever in his Blood.
>
> (162)

Since H. F. admits 'I do not think [it] very possible', this story-in-a-sentence is recounted not in order to demonstrate the curative function of this 'extravagant Adventure' but 'to confirm the many desperate Things which the distress'd People falling into, Deliriums … were frequently run upon' (162–3). The forcibly quickened breathing which the plethora of commas demands, the garrulous and excessive explanatory asides, the repetition of 'run', 'ran' and 'running', and the extreme overall length of the sentence all reinforce a feeling of incoherence, of the frantic, heightening fever and panic induced by plague symptoms. The writing 'rises' with the fever it describes. Rising, indeed, characterises many plague symptoms and events: blistering buboes rise upon the smooth surface of the skin; temperatures and death tolls rise; the miasmas that many physicians in Defoe's day believed were carrying plague arose from stagnant marshes and rotting rubbish heaps.

While the feelings of pain can be diverse, the body's reactions to it and the language used to represent it can sometimes partake of the repetitive and the mundane: universally, fever burns, exhausts, causes restlessness and thirst. This does not have to be limiting, however, since the lexicon of suffering and illness is at least general and shared. Thus, in Camus's description of the final hours of Othon's son, whose childish frame has been the disappointing testing ground for a newly developed vaccine, the reactions of his little body are familiar, if exacerbated due to the nature of the disease and the approach of death:

> When the burning tide struck him again for the third time and raised him [*le souleva*] up a little, the child, bent double and throwing back his blanket, fled to the end of the bed, wildly shaking his head from side to side, in terror of the flame that was burning him. Large tears rose [*jaillissant*] beneath his swollen eyelids and began to flow down his pallid face; when the crisis was over, exhausted, tensing his bony

> legs and his arms from which in forty-eight hours the flesh had dropped away, the child assumed the grotesque pose of a crucified man in the ravaged bed.
>
> (166/171)

The fever is a 'tide' that raises the body; afterwards the child assumes a Christlike pose which intimates, falsely in this instance, that he may possibly rise again, saved, while at the same time underscoring his role as the sacrificial victim of medical science's failure. The drawn-out death of this child, watched closely by nearly all the major characters in *The Plague*, plays a symptomatically central role in the novel: the fever that breaks his small body also emotionally breaks Rieux, who loses his usual medical composure; it shatters the hopes of another doctor, Castel, whose vaccine has only prolonged the suffering. The moment marks a breaking point too for the stern Jesuit priest, Father Paneloux, as he reaches a personal and religious crisis which prompts Rieux to comment that 'from the day when he had to watch for hours while that child died, he seemed changed' (170). As with Defoe, the relentlessness precipitated by plague is written into the language and is apparent in the rising fever which seems to possess the child, causing his desperate physical movements and the tears that rise to his eyes.

A correspondence between disease symptoms and the writing of disease is therefore a distinctive feature of these two plague texts. More specifically, the buboes which push their way up onto the body of the plague victim have their corollary on the body of the text, where as a matter of inevitability there are a variety of small, self-contained narrative outbreaks, describing victims whose appearance is necessarily brief and terminal. Plague interrupts character continuity and development; its symptoms erupt, rupturing relationships, separating characters whose lives and stories were entwined. Hence it is that Camus, whose central cluster of protagonists form a supportive team of health workers, still has to lose a number of them to plague. Even more symptomatic than the loss of major characters are the smallest stories, almost fulfilling the description of 'flash fiction' given by James Thomas in his editorial comment for a collection of very short stories.[7] Such 'flash' tales Thomas defines as roughly between 250 and 750 words, but in the context of plague, and especially in Defoe, these bubonic narratives can be even shorter. They break out over the body of the text and erupt from the surface of the narrative in a way that could be considered 'episodemic' in the light of their disease context and sporadic dispersion. Remarkably, Defoe practises flash fiction *avant la lettre*, a historical precedent which

has so far gone unrecognised. The episodemic nature of the writing in *A Journal of the Plague Year* is striking: the surface of the narrative is rumpled by the bumpy observations of H. F. who, during his walks around England's capital, collects stories and tales in an attempt to trace the sickness of London, as a doctor might gather the symptoms of a patient. These 'episodemics' can be as swift as a paragraph:

> A Family, whose Story I have heard, was thus infected by the Father, and the Distemper began to appear upon some of them, even before he found it upon himself; but searching more narrowly, it appear'd he had been infected some Time, and as soon as he found that his Family had been poison'd by himself he went distracted, and would have laid violent Hands upon himself, but was kept from that by those who look'd to him, and in a few Days died.
>
> (201–2)

So common to the episodemics in both Defoe and Camus, the tragic brevity of this narrative is in keeping with the untimely interruption of life. The story, like the lives it describes, is almost incompletely rendered: it is cut off, cut short. *The Plague* follows *A Journal of the Plague Year* in its use of this stylistic symptom. A selection of Camus's episodemics includes the introduction and quick demise of the concierge, the pathetic death of Othon's son, the disappearance of the old man whose regular habit is to spit at cats from his balcony and the fate of the Opera singer who dies on stage at the moment of his triumphant final song as Orpheus (156). The same effect can be seen in Mary Shelley's plague novel, *The Last Man* (1826), which has a great number of smaller stories that break out around the edges of the main development of events.

Fragmentary, episodemic writing within a novel breaks up the continuity of the narrative and textually embodies the fragmentation of society, family, politics and health which a plague outbreak causes. This kinship between diseased health and unhealthy narratives has been highlighted by Steven Marcus in his reading of Sigmund Freud's case study of Dora. He notes how a suspected hysteria patient was found by the famous psychoanalyst to be suffering instead from a treatable medical condition, which Freud had deduced from her ability to tell her story 'perfectly clearly and connectedly'.[8] Marcus is led to conclude that 'illness amounts at least in part to suffering from an incoherent story or an inadequate narrative account of oneself'.[9] Although Marcus and Freud are identifying narrative fragmentation as indicative of specifically mental illness, the idea that incomplete, fragmentary or, in

Marcus' words, 'inadequate' narratives are in some sense a symptom of disease is richly suggestive of how plague's presence may result in a diseased narrative, a suffering in words of what the body suffers in symptoms. A plague text might stutter, repeat itself or wander incoherently; certainly *A Journal of the Plague Year*, which only loosely follows the chronological path of the epidemic, has these qualities. Another repetitive aspect of all plague narratives is what Elana Gomel has called their 'iterative mortality':

> Sequentiality presupposes a closure followed by a new beginning. The plague, however, is governed by the logic of repetition. The chain of death grows by addition of more and more identical links. Pandemic, in its interminable duration, generates the texts of fragments rather than sequels: an accumulation of repetitive episodes, deferring any kind of meaningful closure.[10]

Yet as *A Journal of the Plague Year* and *The Plague* demonstrate, despite Gomel's insistence here on the repetitive nature of plague deaths, the episodes are all singular and often heartbreaking. Fragmentation and repeated deaths, therefore, do not necessarily imply a narrative lack or a loss: instead, they can imbue plague texts with more imaginative material. Responding to the Sibylline fragments upon which Shelley's *The Last Man* is purportedly written, Sophie Thomas points out that in the context of plague, fragmentation is in fact a form of plenitude:

> Reduction is, paradoxically, accomplished through multiplication, insofar as there is a potentially infinite reproduction of the very condition that ostensibly ushers in closure. The plague, for example, brings on the destruction of man, his (shall we say) progressive diminishment, at the same time as it is a figure for the forces of proliferation. It manages this through its uncontainability, through its capacity to reproduce its destructive effects.[11]

The effect plague's spread has upon people and institutions actually causes a proliferation of what could be considered the symptoms of a plague text, the episodemic narratives. More deaths, more stories; plague disseminates its effects, but it is a strange plenitude indeed.

If on the body of a plague text we can diagnose outbreaks of episodemic, bubonic narratives, the corpus of an author's work, the body of his or her writing, is also a site where diseased textual symptoms can arise. As though to emphasise the contagious element at play here, both

Defoe and Camus have plague publications in – or on – their corpuses other than those under discussion so far: both were obsessed by plague, both returned to it repeatedly. The editor of Defoe's *A Journal of the Plague Year*, Louis Landa, goes so far as to suggest that,

> [w]e do better to consider the *Journal* not as an isolated work: it is, in fact, the culmination of a persistent interest in plague expressed in Defoe's writing for at least a decade before he wrote the *Journal*. The very idea of plague seems to have been an abiding fact in his consciousness.
>
> (x)

In addition to the numerous references in his journalism to plague, a mere month before the publication of *A Journal of the Plague Year*, Defoe had produced a different plague text, whose full title gives a useful synopsis of its aims: *Due Preparations for the Plague, as well as for Soul as Body: Being some seasonal THOUGHTS upon the Visible Approach of the present dreadful CONTAGION in* France*; the properest Measures to prevent it, and the great Work of submitting to it.*[12] In referring to the 'dreadful contagion in France' Defoe is of course alluding to the terrifying plague outbreak of 1720 in Marseilles, during which Europe waited tremulously to see whether the disease would begin to spread. It is as though Defoe were 'saying it to keep it from happening', to steal the title of one of John Ashbery's poems: a writing of plague that would function to ward off the disease, the deployment of plague discourse as preventative medicine.[13] Yet, as Jacques Derrida has shown, discourse that attempts to make itself immune by trying to ward off a threat is liable to suffer from that which it attempts to deny.[14] This 'autoimmunity', a term suitably drawn from a medical lexicon and which names the moment when a body's defences begin attacking what they are supposed to protect, presents itself in Defoe as an obsession with writing plague, apparent in his vociferous journalism upon the topic as well as in the publication of *A Journal of the Plague Year* and *Due Preparations*. The more Defoe writes of plague, warding it off, the more his writing becomes, autoimmune-like, infected by plague effects. Luckily, the disease did not reach England, although it did reach Defoe's readers time and again in textual form. *Due Preparations*, however, is a very different text from *A Journal of the Plague Year*. As Landa notes, it is more in line with Defoe's other instructive texts such as *The Complete English Tradesman* (1725) or *The Family Instructor* (1715). Although it has its share of fictional components – featuring particularly the story

of a grocer who shuts his family up with stored goods as an exemplary method of avoiding plague, and a devout sister whose spiritual preparation for death is an inspiration to one of her brothers and a reproach to the other – it eschews the literary device of a narrator and takes a more admonitory and homiletic tone than *A Journal of the Plague Year*. The question of why Defoe wrote *A Journal of the Plague Year* as well as *Due Preparations*, apart from possible commercial reasons, seems to resolve itself on this very point of fiction: due to its eyewitness narrator, *A Journal of the Plague Year* is a more effective tool for expressing the horror and extent of plague, and thus more likely to influence the spiritual life of its readers than a straightforward repetition of the well-worn 'warning to beware' formula.

Camus, too, did not present plague to the public just the once: an early extract of his novel was published during the Second World War in an underground resistance collection and, a year after the release of *The Plague*, the first performance of his plague play *State of Siege* was staged at the Théâtre Marigny, Paris.[15] As I discuss in Chapter 2, in the play the disease is literally embodied: Plague is a portly, officious and a ruthless dictator. The drama is clearly allegorical and, in an Author's Preface to a collection of his plays, Camus confirmed of *State of Siege* that 'it is utterly useless to accuse my characters of being symbolical. I plead guilty'.[16] He is also categorical about how he wishes his work on the plague to be interpreted: '*State of Siege* is in no way an adaptation of my novel *The Plague*' (viii). The two texts are very different, though both link plague to repressive systems that destroy lives.[17] Plague also plagued Camus in a much more personal sense: it not only gave him creative material for drama and narrative, it clotted his creativity, like blood stagnating in the veins of the dying or in the lungs of the consumptive.

Plague and parasitism

The flea, a 'vector' in epidemiological terms, is a key player in the plague dance of death.[18] Without the fleas, the bacteria would be the disease equivalent of a suicide bomb, killing the rats and thus killing itself because the plague bacillus cannot survive outside the body of a host. Instead, the flea allows the bacteria, parasite of a parasite, to stay on the move, infecting from one to another, from rat to flea to human, eating where it can, where it will, eating quite literally at the expense of another, since the plague bacillus kills the rat, the flea and the human who play host to it. Plague writings too feed off one

another, parasitise each other, infectiously incorporating one another's images and circulating themes between themselves. For example, the ambiguous epigraph of *The Plague* is feasted from Defoe: 'It is as reasonable to represent one kind of imprisonment by another, as it is to represent anything that really exists by that which exists not' (3). Quoting belongs to the logic of the parasite: Camus had been feeding upon the little-known third volume of Robinson Crusoe, entitled *Serious Reflections* (1720).[19] Defoe had written this defence of his Crusoe narratives in part to repudiate accusations of the work being '*form'd and embellish'd by invention*' (v). Not true, Defoe parried, claiming, rather mysteriously to twenty-first century ears, that *Robinson Crusoe* was both historical, and therefore true, and simultaneously allegorical. Within the context of the Second World War and Camus's own admission of how the novel relates to events of that time, the little portion of Defoe's text which Camus chooses strongly encourages an allegorical reading of *The Plague*. Camus listed Defoe in the *Carnets* with Tolstoy, Melville and Cervantes as '[p]oints of references from abroad' (1). Because of *A Journal of the Plague Year*, and, perhaps to a lesser extent, *Due Preparations*, Defoe has been the touchstone for many writers who have tackled plague or used its presence to stage fiction.

The breadth of pestilential indebtedness to Defoe includes a whole host of authors, of whom maybe the most glutinous is William Harrison Ainsworth. His historical romance *Old St. Paul's: A Tale of the Plague and the Fire* (1841) appropriated characters, settings and even descriptions from Defoe's plague writings.[20] Ainsworth acknowledged his borrowings in an 'Advertisement' at the front of the novel, going so far as to pronounce Defoe's *Due Preparations* a 'masterpiece'. The grocer and his family from *Due Preparations* form the central core of Ainsworth's farcical tale; when he lists the stores and provisions that the household shut away with themselves during the epidemic, it is not his list but Defoe's, with only minor amendments. Ainsworth also adopts and fattens out several characters from *A Journal of the Plague Year*, including the Quaker enthusiast Solomon Eagle, who in Defoe's rendering, 'tho' not infected at all, but in his Head, went about denouncing of Judgement upon the City in a frightful manner; sometimes quite naked, and with a Pan of burning Charcoal on his Head' (103). Dressed in nineteenth-century clothing, Ainsworth's Eagle behaves in a like manner, although he is eventually made responsible for the Great Fire as well. It is as though an author writing of plague has to acknowledge Defoe's legacy. Hence it is that Mary Shelley, in her plague novel *The Last Man*, refers her

readers to Defoe, almost as though he were an appendix for those with an unnatural relish for death and disease:

> Does the reader wish to hear of the pest-houses, where death is the comforter – of the mournful passage of the death-cart – of the insensibility of the worthless, and the anguish of the loving heart – of harrowing shrieks and silence dire – of the variety of disease, desertion, famine, despair, and death? There are many books which can feed the appetite craving for these things; let them turn to the accounts of Boccaccio, De Foe, and Browne.[21]

The 'silence dire' of which Shelley speaks here recalls the words of the sexton in *A Journal of the Plague Year* who attempts to dissuade H. F. from visiting the burial pits. He says of them '[t]is a speaking Sight', a neat formulation of how images can be moving and emotive vectors for plague's effects (61). The pit of dead bodies speaks (in silence) for itself. The Browne to whom Shelley refers is Charles Brockden Brown, the author of *Arthur Mervyn* (1799–1800), a novel set during an American outbreak of cholera.[22] As Shelley notes, the tale includes scenes of death and putridity, as does Boccaccio's description of the Florentine plague in his 'Introduction' to the *Decameron*. More recently, Janette Turner Hospital's thriller about terrorism, *Due Preparations for the Plague* (2004), borrows its title from Defoe, while the South African writer André Brink prefaces his *Wall of the Plague* (1984) with excerpts from the plague texts of Camus, Antonin Artaud, Boccaccio, Defoe and the plague historian Philip Ziegler. The text of the novel is further latticed with quotations from these and a variety of other writers who have described plague in either a historical or literary capacity. Such is Defoe's reach that Laurel Brodsley sees in *A Journal of the Plague Year* a model for plague stories that has influenced AIDS narratives such as Randy Shilts's *The Band Played On* (1987), a diary-memoir of the early period of the AIDS outbreak.[23] Defoe's plague texts continue to infect recent writers' imaginations.

The effects of a plague epidemic make descriptions of burial pits, public disorder and fragmentation, death-carts and tales of loss and mourning an inevitable part of plague writing and therefore common to all. The propensity of plague writers for feeding upon and quoting from one another reveals that they are attentive readers, as well as writers, of plague. This intertextual plague family, wherein texts play host to and parasitise each other, may be a product of the belatedness of which they all partake: plague, after all, has not broken out in Western Europe with any epidemic force since 1720. Through reference to other plague

writings, narrative verisimilitude is lent to the horror described in the texts, with Defoe more often than not used as an anchor point. It may well be, indeed, that Defoe's fusion of fiction and history makes his text more pertinent to these writers than the other plethora of medical and religious tracts of the time on the same topic. Names and extracts circulate contagiously among these texts; certain staple characters and scenarios are caught up from one writer to another. Already mentioned is Solomon Eagle, but his strain of doom-laden exhortation is also preached by Camus's Father Paneloux and Shelley's 'imposter-prophet' figure. Defoe himself was not above a little borrowing: included in *A Journal of the Plague Year* is the episodemic tale of the sleeping piper who is taken for a corpse, levered into the death-cart, only to awake moments before being catapulted into a mass burial pit with the words, '*Hey! Where am I?*' (91). When told of the fate he has just escaped, he responds, '*But I an't dead tho', am I?*' which 'made them laugh a little' (91). This scene was borrowed by Monty Python to great comic effect in their film *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*.[24] Landa notes that Defoe is by no means the first to describe the risk of live burial during plague epidemics: the tale is thought to date back in print to 1603 (274). Unsurprisingly, Ainsworth pilfers the figure of the impoverished piper for his novel, although he does not repeat the death-cart incident. Plague citations tend towards the epigraphic and the weighty, lending the parasiting text the authenticity of participating in a legacy of plague, whereas when writers borrow incidents, characters or scenes it tends towards the comedic, offering a playful tonic among the usual fare of death and infection – as with the piper or the pompous chiliasm of prophetic judgements.

This parasitism is not confined to feeding upon other plague writers. It can take the form of feeding upon the self, upon one's own work, by enacting what Michel Serres has called 'autoparasitism' in his study *The Parasite*.[25] Camus's *Carnets*, posthumously edited and published by his widow and Roger Quilliot, contain detailed notes on works that were in progress, comments on and quotations from authors he was reading, and a host of different ideas that were to be developed into novels and short stories. Most of the latter never made it further than their *Carnets* entry, but some are recognisably incorporated into his fiction, mutated a little upon the way. In relation to *The Plague*, there are a great many comments, scattered over a seven-year period. The notes range from formative jottings such as '[i]t must definitely be an account, a chronicle. But what a lot of problems this creates' (32); to instructions: 'Don't put "The Plague" in the title. But something like "The Prisoners"' (17); and

much longer sections where a whole incident may be recounted, almost exactly as it would appear in the final text. Even isolated sentences written in the notebooks make their way into the novel. Compare, from the *Carnets*: 'The plague abolishes value judgements. People give up judging the quality of clothing, food, etc. They accept everything' (53), with the following from the novel: 'The plague had suppressed value judgements. This could be seen in the way that no one cared any longer about the quality of the clothes or the food that they bought. Everything was accepted as it came' (142). The notebooks feed into *The Plague* as Camus parasites himself, taking chunks out of the *Carnets* for his novel. Serres has made the connection between writing and parasitism, pointing out how the parasitism between a writer and his work is a reciprocal, reversible and mutually infectious process:

> What is a work? It eats its worker, devouring his flesh and his time; it is slowly substituted for his body. This invasion causes fear. Who am I? This, there, written in black on white, fragile, and this is my body, has taken the place of my body, frail. This is written in my blood; I am bleeding from it, and it will stop only with the last drop. The work parasites the worker ; no, soon he no longer exists. He dies of it. And he can do nothing about it. He lives from it. I eat my work and from it; I drink this streaming production daily.
>
> (131)

The parasite needs the host, destroys the host, produces a writing across the body of the host: no work without writer, no writer without a work that consumes him or her, pushing for finality and termination. An interesting fact about the flea: the plague bacillus sickens it, blocking its stomach and forcing it to jump to ever new hosts in an attempt to get the life-blood it needs. A work, too, pushes the writer forward and inevitably he or she parasites on the way, perhaps spilling a little of the blood that a book can extract from its author.

Language and creativity: Plagued writing

It is not particularly easy to diagnose exactly what type of book Defoe's *A Journal of the Plague Year* actually is. Landa states that it 'is singularly inappropriate to call the *Journal* a novel, but there remains the vexed question of whether it is history or fiction' (xxxvii). Others have come down firmly on the side of history; one of the most influential books that helped to establish this is Watson Nicholas's *The Historical Sources*

of Defoe's Journal of the Plague Year, first published in 1920, which states that 'there is not a single essential statement in the *Journal* not based on historic fact. … Indeed, one of Defoe's crowning achievements in compiling the *Journal* consisted in curbing his natural predilection for invention'.[26] Definitions of essentiality aside, Nicholas's project treats *A Journal of the Plague Year* as though it has no fictional elements whatsoever and ignores any possible questions about the fictionality inherent in narrative constructions of history. However, *A Journal of the Plague Year*'s subtitle makes its own claim for historical authenticity and truth, announcing itself as: *Being Observations or Memorials of the Most Remarkable Occurrences as well Publick as Private, which happened in London During the last Great Visitation in 1665*, and further proclaiming that it is '[w]ritten by a Citizen who continued all the while in London. Never made publick before'. This was a familiar stratagem practised by writers of the time and one of which Defoe made extensive use when publishing his novels; contemporary readers would most probably have been fully aware of the hybridising of fiction and history contained within. Nevertheless, the inclusion early on of the Bills of Mortality figures and the Lord Mayor's Orders do initially give *A Journal of the Plague Year* the air of a researched history and, as has been noted by many, the narrator, whose name is given only as H. F., shares his initials, occupation and neighbourhood with Defoe's uncle, Henry Foe.

Despite these apparently compelling reasons for considering *A Journal of the Plague Year* to be primarily an attempt at history, the presence of a first-person narrator is clearly a fictional device. Since *A Journal of the Plague Year* predates any conception of the 'novel' and memoirs were a popular formula that merged historical events with imaginary narrators, the genre disputes aroused by Defoe's corpus betray a twentieth and twenty-first century preoccupation with historical accuracy and truth which cannot be simply transposed to the eighteenth century. In her essay 'Defoe's Journal and the English Plague Writing Tradition', Margaret Healy sets out to trace the relationship of *A Journal of the Plague Year* to its predecessors, stating that she,

> rejects such simplistic distinctions between the real and the imaginative, implicitly arguing that the tenacious impulse to draw lines between the factual and the fictitious in Defoe is inappropriate and misleading. For the committed Protestant writer, the creative appropriation of history was not as problematic as some commentators suggest; in fact, it was entirely acceptable in the service of religious reform and 'spiritual profit'.[27]

Co-opting fiction for religious ends suggests that there is a quality in fictionality that fulfils a purpose for which religion alone is perhaps inadequate. Stephenson, in the essay 'The Plague Narratives of Defoe and Camus', traces how in both authors' texts, plague first of all precipitates an overwhelming imaginative response in the characters, provoking people to seek stories, prophecies and explanations of a medical, spiritual and fantastic nature.[28] Plague as an unknown force, a mysterious power of death, creates a void which fiction and narratives fill:

> And so it is with plague: the blank face of a ghastly pestilence provokes the imagination to create images to fill the void. But there are no visual hints to prefigure the alien identity of plague; the imagination is radically free to invent its own shape for the unseen.
>
> (229)

Further on, Stephenson's account identifies an attenuation in imaginative response when the epidemic increases in fury and the death toll rises: at this point, he argues, 'as the metaphorical thing without threatens to become the physical thing within, the initial energy of the imagination begins to fade' (232). Before they are exhausted by plague, but as medicine fails to give a reassuring account of its aetiology and religion of its reason, people seek narratives to supplement the lack of explanatory knowledge. As recognised by both Healy and Stephenson, there are unlikely dynamics at work between plague and creative writing.

If bubonic plague at least offers the bubo as symptom for both the doctor and the public seeking narratives of explanation, two secondary forms of plague, pneumonic and septicaemic are deadlier, quicker and provide fewer initial outward symptoms for interpretation. Both arise from their bubonic sibling but have comparatively shorter periods of development and lower recovery rates. In the pneumonic strain, the plague bacteria enter the lungs, blocking them up with infectious pus, causing respiratory problems and coughing. It is also highly contagious: having done away with the need for the flea, pneumonic plague can be spread from human to human through droplet infection. Without treatment, there is very little, if any, hope of survival, as the following nursery rhyme rather exuberantly indicates in its final line: 'Ring around a Rosie / A pocket full of posy / Atchoo! Atchoo! / We all fall down!'[29] The victim splutters to a grim end, sometimes turning black before death as the oxygen supply is gradually strangled. In septicaemic plague, on the other hand, the bacteria invade the bloodstream, spreading throughout the body so fast that the immune system struggles to respond.

No buboes are formed when the plague infection is septicaemic: there simply is not enough time since the victim usually dies within two days. In other words, untreated, this strain of plague carries a 100 per cent chance of mortality. However, it is the least common and develops either as a result of direct infection from the pus or blood of a sufferer or as a 'complication' of either the pneumonic or bubonic strain of the disease. As they circulate around the body, the plague bacteria cause the blood to clot and coagulate: victims usually perish from major organ failure or severe septicaemic blood poisoning.[30] In Defoe's day, the different strains of plague were not rigorously distinguished, but it seems clear from certain descriptions that septicaemic plague was, if beyond diagnosis, still an active contributor to the rising death toll:

> Sometimes a Man or Woman dropt down Dead in the very Markets; for many People that had the Plague upon them, knew nothing of it; till the inward Gangreen had affected their Vitals and they dy'd in a few Moments; this caus'd, that many died frequently in that Manner in the Streets suddainly, without any warning.
>
> (78–9)

Such a death must have been an even more terrifying and inexplicable prospect than that caused by the bubonic form. The choked lungs and coagulated veins of the pneumonic and septicaemic strains of plague which obstruct the usual free flow of blood have a penmanship counterpart in the common enough metaphor of writing as a process of flow and its clogging as writer's block. In her book about the act of writing, Hélène Cixous goes so far as to suggest that the writing of a book might even be a risking of the writerly self: 'It can also happen,' she explains, 'that an author will kill himself or herself writing'.[31] Much as in Serres's conception of the painful work of writing, for Cixous it can be a dangerous enterprise. She continues: 'The only book that is worth writing is the one we don't have the strength or courage to write. The book that hurts us (we who are writing), that makes us tremble, redden, bleed. It is combat against ourselves, the author; one of us must be vanquished or die' (32). Camus experienced this self-struggle while he was writing *The Plague*. Not only was it written in spite of frequent attacks of writer's block, but this knotty authorial blain is incorporated into the novel as the abiding affliction of one of its most poignant characters, the civil servant and amateur novelist Joseph Grand.

All of *The Plague*'s central characters are, significantly, writers in some capacity, professionally or privately, yet for Camus the writing of the

novel was a time of considerable authorial crisis. In his posthumously published *Carnets* it is clear that plague had been an ongoing interest for him since 1942, but that the actual writing of the novel was a slow process, moving through at least two distinct versions.[32] In the notebook from September 1945 to April 1948 Camus admits to the writer's block which plagued his novel from the start: 'In all my life, never such a feeling of failure. I am not even sure that I shall finish it' (89). Plagued by *The Plague*, his confidence was infected with doubt about the novel, on and off, for the seven years it took to finalise the text. Even upon completion, Camus was uncertain; Olivier Todd, in his biography *Albert Camus: A Life*, quotes from his letters:

> On August 21st he [Camus] reported, 'I have worked so much that yesterday I finished my book. I should be happy, but I cannot yet judge. I am blind in the face of this bizarre book, whose form is slightly monstrous. I do not know yet whether I shall call it *The Terror* or *The Plague*.' Invariably, he passed through doubt first and foremost: 'I'm not sure if I am expecting that the light will return, that I'll feel once again as if I had talent and strength.'[33]

Camus feels physically drained by the experience of his 'monstrous' plague narrative; the battle of which Cixous writes leaves him exhausted.

Since writer's block characterised the period of writing *The Plague*, it is hardly surprising to find its symptoms within the novel, which hosts a variety of writers who symbiotically struggle with the act of writing during the epidemic or whose writing fails them. That this negative portrayal of writing and composition was not always the intention of Camus is made clear by a *Carnet* entry: 'Plague. Separated, they write to each other, and he finds the right tone and keeps her love. A triumph for language and for good writing' (64). By the time the novel is published, however, the 'triumph for language and for good writing' has all but disappeared. In the published version, letters are forbidden and the permitted telegrams only provide a restricted space so that 'before long whole lives lived together or painful passions were reduced to a periodic exchange of stock phrases' (54). Language itself is blocked. The narrator details how the ineffability of plague robs words of their meaning and of their very life, impeding the usual human ability and need to communicate one's experience to another:

> [A]fter a certain time words which had been at first torn bleeding from our hearts became void of sense. We copied them down

> mechanically, trying by means of these dead words to give some idea of our ideal. And in the end, the conventional call of a telegram seemed to us preferable to this sterile, obstinate monologue and this arid conversation with a blank wall.
>
> (54–5)

In the event of plague words are useless. Death infects them, contaminating with blankness and sterility the language Oran's occupants feel they would ordinarily command; the initial 'imaginative response' identified by Stephenson quickly atrophies. An echo of this struggle to find the language for expression is found in the poignant despondency of Camus when he wrote of the novel '[i]n all my life, never such a feeling of failure'. As the townsfolk in *The Plague* found that they cannot marshal the language to describe their experience to one another, they instead:

> [R]esigned themselves to using the language of the market-place and themselves speaking in a conventional manner, that of the simple account or newspaper report, which is to some extent that of the daily chronicle [*la chronique quotidienne*] of events. Here too the most authentic sufferings were habitually translated into the banal clichés of conversation.
>
> (60 & F 62)

Plague alters the ability of people to speak of the horror of their experiences; under its conditions, language is tired, lacking the descriptive vitality which would take it beyond a mere factual listing of occurrences. The physical and emotional effects of fighting plague enervate and enfeeble language itself.

Even traditional forms of informative writing, such as newspaper journalism, suffer during plague, beginning with the 'silence dire' of which Shelley writes: as the people in *The Plague* begin to die agonising and foetid deaths, '[t]he press, which had had so much to say about the business of the rats, fell silent. This is because rats die in the street and people in their bedrooms; newspapers are only concerned with the street' (29). A new newspaper, *The Courier of the Epidemic*, its ironic title recalling the maddened and infectious running of Defoe's plague sufferer who swam the Thames, eventually opens with a flourishing mission statement promising to keep the inhabitants of Oran informed and their morale high, but the narrator comments: 'In reality, the paper very soon confined itself to publishing advertisements for new products which were infallible in protecting against plague' (92). On the whole journalism

gets short shrift in *The Plague*. The language and profession of newspaper reportage are depicted as disingenuous and hackneyed, cynical and insincere, a clichéd, shorthand substitution when language proves inadequate for describing plague and its consequences. Significantly, the journalist, Raymond Rambert, refuses to write a report on the epidemic. Inadvertently stranded in Oran during the quarantine while researching an article on the living conditions of the Arabs, all his subsequent energy and thought are consumed in attempts to escape the quarantine. Twice Rieux suggests that Rambert write a report for his newspaper about plague; the first time he replies with a polite but noncommittal comment, the second with a shrug and a refutation of his job as a writer: 'I wasn't put on this earth to make reports; but perhaps I was put on this earth to live with a woman' (66). Rambert's reluctance to write a plague report, at first seemingly inexplicable and stubborn, helps to secure his place among the more sympathetic characters of the novel through his eventual decision to commit to combating the disease as part of the health teams. Plague has killed his desire to write, but eventually becomes that which he wishes to fight. Rambert survives the plague, realising that 'everything would be given back to him' as he meets his girlfriend at the station, ready to take up his old life and profession again (227).

At the beginning of the epidemic the people in *The Plague*, as in *A Journal of the Plague Year*, were drawn to church; a week of prayer was held and Father Paneloux, the Jesuit priest 'of fiery and passionate temperament' (72) delivered a sermon which began with the ominous words: 'My brethren, a calamity has befallen you; my brethren, you have deserved it' (73). After watching the death of Othon's son, however, he begins penning 'a short exposé', intended as a sermon on the topic of whether a priest can consult a doctor (170). By this point in the outbreak, the citizens of Oran have developed a penchant for superstition as a replacement for religion and the churches are lacking their earlier high attendances. Nevertheless, Rieux attends Paneloux's sermon, the central argument of which is that '[o]ne must believe everything or deny everything' (173). Put another way, belief in God implies an acceptance of plague as part of his divine plan, however incomprehensible that plan may seem, with the only other option, in Paneloux's stark vision, being total loss of faith. Such views border upon heresy, other priests note, but Paneloux lives it to the letter: upon falling ill, he refuses to seek medical attention or allow Rieux to treat him. Paneloux's writing, the sermon, fails to convince Rieux, just as it appears to fail in convincing or swelling the chilly congregation. More pathetically, it fails to save the life of Paneloux himself.

When it comes to writer's block, on the other hand, *The Plague* offers up the survival of the touchingly absurd civil servant, Joseph Grand, whose attempts to write a novel have progressed no further than one ordinary sentence, on which he continually seeks to improve, chasing an elusive perfection. Grand is described as a man for whom 'words failed' (36), a man who cannot write the letter that might gain him a promotion and who admits of his estranged wife: 'At a certain moment I ought to have found the words that would have kept her, but I couldn't' (65). Despite this inarticulateness, Grand pursues his 'honourable obsession' (37) until towards the end of the epidemic he catches plague and asks Rieux to burn his manuscript. While fulfilling this apparently final wish, Rieux learns that 'all these pages contained only the same sentence, copied out over and over, reworked to make it richer or poorer' (202). Grand had been plagued for a writer's lifetime by this one sentence which, although it dissatisfied him and caught him within a circular paralysis, at least enabled him to continue being a writer, battling with the authorial self, as Cixous describes. His sentence tells the tiny tale of a woman riding a mare down a Parisian street: perhaps the shortest piece of 'flash fiction' ever, and one subjected by Grand to the 'logic of repetition' which Gomel sees as a feature of plague narratives. Plague infection kills Grand's authorial desire, but having fought plague successfully he states his resolve to begin the novel anew. With the survival of plague comes the will to write again: his life and his passion for writing have resisted the disease. The narrator, in actual fact, goes so far as to place Grand in pride of place in the novel:

> Yes, if men really do have to offer themselves models and examples whom they call heroes, and if there really has to be one in this story, the narrator would like to offer this insignificant and self-effacing hero who had nothing to recommend him but a little goodness in his heart and an apparently ridiculous ideal.
>
> (105)

Imitation, as Freud and Le Bon agree, is a form of contagion, a mental infection.[34] Grand is diseased; plagued by the interminable writing and rewriting to which he submits himself, fighting the coagulation of words in an effort to find expression (37). The erasure of the sentence at the point when he might die manages to imbue him with the strength to fight off plague. He is the only one. In a circular dance which holds off death, writer's block is replaced by plague which is, in turn, replaced by the plaguing sentence once again. So perhaps, after all, he is a fitting

example to hold up for imitation: fighting plague brings out the best in Grand, giving him the chance to help others as part of the health team and, after his own personal struggle against plague, his novelistic hopes are renewed. Plague's killing of language, its disruption of writing and voiding of expressive capabilities does not always triumph and cannot last: writing returns to outlive plague.

Plague's narrator: The witness

Defoe closes *A Journal of the Plague Year* with the following short ditty: '*A dreadful Plague in* London *was, / In the Year Sixty Five, / Which swept an Hundred Thousand Souls / Away; yet I alive!*' (248). It is the 'I alive' which allows Defoe to posit H. F. as an eyewitness and Camus to do the same with his narrator-survivor, Rieux. Mary Shelley, too, uses this narratorial device; her witness believes himself to be the last survivor of the human race. These texts are, in effect, fictional testimonies and attest to the centrality of the position of the witness in accounts of plague. As Gomel notes of H. F., such a plague witness has 'a privileged textual position' which 'grants him immunity' (410). This immunity provides the protection of writing plague instead of catching it, yet stands as the token that plague is not finished: H. F. and Rieux's roles are only exhausted when plague is too. On the other hand, it is plague which makes them writers in the first place, since as citizen and doctor respectively they do not appear to be writers before the outbreak. While Defoe's *A Journal of the Plague Year* is a first-person narrative from the opening line, *The Plague* employs a third-person narrative voice throughout. In the last few pages of Camus's novel a confession is delivered, albeit still not in the first person: 'This chronicle is drawing to a close. It is time for Dr Bernard Rieux to admit that he is its author' (232). Rieux has certainly been the character whom the narrative has followed most closely, but there was no obvious earlier evidence to anticipate his deliberate suppression of a first-person address to the reader. The reason he gives in his admission is that 'he has tried to adopt the tone of an objective witness' (232). The text continues: 'Being called upon to bear witness in the event of a sort of crime, he maintained a certain reserve, as a well-intentioned witness should' (232). The well-intentioned witness, he implies, is one who withholds their own emotional response and attempts to report only what they have seen or heard; this, a few lines on, is exactly how Rieux defines it: 'To bear faithful witness he had to report chiefly acts, documents and hearsay. What he personally had to say, his own waiting, his trials, he had to pass over in silence' (232). Gomel believes Defoe

and Camus inherit this prescription for narrative detachment from an established legacy of plague description:

> There is a special narrative voice proper to pestilence. This is the voice of Thucydides describing the great plague of Athens in the second book of his *History of the Peloponnesian War*: a clinical, carefully detailed description, strangely detached, despite the fact that the historian was one of the victims of the disease.
>
> (410)

Camus only embodies this voice 'proper to pestilence' at the final moment, when Rieux says of himself: 'Incontestably, he had to speak for all' (232).[35] 'I' cannot speak for all, the inference is, if I say 'I', although Rieux intermittently uses 'our' or 'we', a mark of community solidarity and a refutation of his own narrative uniqueness or priority.[36] The voice proper to plague, as the presence of episodemics testifies, is legion, even if these tales are only recounted by one. Gomel observes that the plague witness '[loses] their individuality to become the voice of the plague-stricken community' (411), hence the impersonality of Rieux's account and the conviction that he had to 'speak for all'.

Defoe's H. F., on the other hand, opens *A Journal of the Plague Year* with an 'I' in the first sentence and finishes it upon the already quoted, celebratory 'I alive'. Yet he too has reservations about the presentation of merely a personalised account, hinting, as Rieux does, at self-censorship:

> Such intervals as I had, I employed in reading Books, and in writing down my Memorandums of what occurred to me every Day, and out of which, afterwards, I [took] most of this Work as it relates to my Observations without Doors: What I wrote of my private Meditations I reserve for private Use, and desire it may not be made publick on any Account whatever.
>
> (76–7)

A new reason now obtrudes to explain the higher rate of episodemic narratives in *A Journal of the Plague Year*: without the disguise of a third-person narrative, and wishing to retain the authority of being an 'eyewitness', H. F. collects as many differing tales and incidents as possible to avoid presenting a record of 'private Meditations'. Happy to give his opinion on issues of public health and trade relations, matters very much 'without Doors', when it comes to plague's victims the stories are either claimed to be harvested from a third-person who had

seen the events or presented as the personal eyewitness accounts of H. F., imbuing them with the desired verisimilitude. If, as sometimes is the case, H. F. reports events that he believes are not reliable he highlights why the information might be suspect: his reticence to credit what he considered to be exaggerated accounts of murderous nurses and watchmen is an apt example and such equivocations have the advantage of adding to the overall reality-effect (83). Both H. F. and Rieux make this claim for the factuality of their data, be it garnered from public acts, official documents or eyewitness observations, the former through his flaneur-style wanderings around plaguey London and the latter in his capacity as a doctor.

The witness, for these plague texts, is the crucial figure; the authority and the author. Nevertheless, *A Journal of the Plague Year* and *The Plague* are their authors' fictions: Camus never experienced a plague epidemic and Defoe would have been only five years old during the 1665 outbreak. Writing of his novel, Camus suggests that he is providing a different kind of witnessing, one which operates through the use of plague as analogy. In his *Carnets* he endorses an interpretation which sees in the fight against plague a representation of the recently won fight against Nazism:

> I want to express by means of the plague the suffocation from which we all suffered and the atmosphere of threat and exile in which we all lived. At the same time, I want to extend this interpretation to the notion of existence in general. The plague will give the image of those whose share in this war has been that of reflection, silence – and moral suffering.
>
> (35)

A letter from Camus to Roland Barthes additionally confirms that this is at least one of the paths open to an understanding of the novel: '*The Plague*, which I wanted to be read on a number of levels, nevertheless has as its obvious content the struggle of the European resistance movements against Nazism'.[37] This very pointed attempt, in a now-published letter, to direct the way in which *The Plague* is read raises the question of why an analogy is necessary at all. If the plague is the encroaching dictatorship of the Nazis and the death it brings is akin to the Holocaust, then why not write a novel which draws upon these historical moments and experiences without the medium of a plague analogy?

Shoshana Felman suggests an answer to this question in her essay 'Camus' *The Plague* or a Monument to Witnessing', where she argues that the fictional plague of Camus's novel provides a powerful literary

testimony to the impact of the Holocaust. She notes the timing of the novel's composition and traces the allusions to events of the Second World War within it, which for her include: the way plague on a large scale is like the Jewish Holocaust insofar as it is almost unbelievable in its extent; the resemblance between Oran's quarantined isolation camps and Nazi concentration camps; and the similarity between the health teams committed to fighting plague and the French Resistance, of which Camus was a member, fighting the Nazi occupation. Despite the support the *Carnets* entry and the letter provide for her point, however, Felman does not refer to them. Instead, her argument raises the possibility that plague writing could be an alternative to historical accounts or journalism. She argues that in *The Plague* Camus has produced a text which, even though does not openly declare itself to be about the Holocaust, almost because of this, exemplifies:

> [T]he way in which traditional relationships of narrative to history *have changed* through the historical necessity of involving literature in action, of creating a new form of *narrative as testimony* not merely to record, but to rethink and, in the act of its rethinking, in effect *transform history* by bearing literary witness to the Holocaust.
>
> (95)

Given the existence of Defoe's *A Journal of the Plague Year*, however, this form of 'narrative as testimony' is not at all new: it is not only much older than the Holocaust – which for Felman is the catalyst for Camus's new practice – it is, in fact, older than the novel. Defoe, like the Camus that emerges in Felman's reading, is concerned that people do not forget; *A Journal of the Plague Year* too is not merely a record but, to recall Healy's observation, a 'creative appropriation of history'.

In Felman's opinion, the necessity for 'narrative as testimony' to 'bear literary witness to the Holocaust' stems from a historical, as well as individual, inability to imagine a destruction of life on such a scale:

> It is precisely because history as holocaust proceeds from a *failure to imagine*, that it takes an *imaginative* medium like the Plague to gain an insight into its historical *reality*, as well as into the attested historicity of its unimaginability.
>
> (105)

Carrier of the imaginative medium, carrier of plague, literature can render the Holocaust more imaginable than the abstract statistics of

history. Thus, for Felman, plague becomes an imaginative substitute in alignment with Defoe's claim, used by Camus in his epigraph to the novel, that '[it] is as reasonable to represent one kind of imprisonment by another, as it is to represent anything that really exists by that which exists not'. However, her formulation is not entirely satisfactory, on several counts. Firstly, if Camus's *The Plague* is to be accepted as an allegory or an imaginative substitute for the (unimaginability of the) Second War World and the Holocaust, what this manifestly fails to address, and where it becomes an abstraction, is in the implicit alignment of the events of the war with an inexplicable force of nature, plague. Such a move naturalises horror, removing the need for a historical, political and social investigation of the causes and events of war: like Oran's plague, the war would thus be a tragedy that arrived without warning, killed without reason and ceased without explanation. The questions the novel raises in relation to abstraction, witnessing and the writing of plague are more sophisticated than such a reduction; Felman is correct in seeing plague's relationship to the Holocaust in Camus's text but I have reservations about a reading that identifies such an allegory yet does not explore it as problematic.[38] Secondly, such a reading of *The Plague* replicates Camus's avowal, privileging authorial intention at the expense of other, perhaps equally productive and interesting avenues for understanding and interpretation. Lastly, Felman's emphasis upon the allegorical nature of Camus's text obscures what both *The Plague* and *A Journal of the Plague Year* enact: literature's gift is not in being a substitute for failures to render history imaginable; it is in the complicated provision of a witness who is entirely fictional and can thus claim, in Rieux's words, to 'speak for all'. The problem for history is to reconcile and accommodate the facts and events of traumatic life-loss, be they caused by war or plague, with the testimony of the eyewitness. This is something that, in the wake of the Holocaust and other tragedies such as the ethnic cleansing in Rwanda, is being addressed through the compilation of eyewitness archives which exist, sometimes comfortably, sometimes less so, alongside the official documentations which we more ordinarily associate with historical accounts.[39] What literature can do is to step into the gap between the official account and the eyewitness, whose perspective is often personal and therefore limited, and provide a narrative which gives the impression of having official and myriad eyewitness positions at its command.

The witness which fiction can provide thus occupies a fantasy space; this would be one of the strongest arguments available for claiming Defoe's *A Journal of the Plague Year* to be a part of literature or at the very

least to be of the order of fiction rather than history. The one who survives, the witness, is the person who chronicles, who is in a position to note, to see, to hear and to report. Yet, the plague witness who attempts to speak for all is a literary construct: he or she is simultaneously a survivor, the fictional 'I', and the voice which testifies to the decimation enacted by a disease which attacks, by its nature, a community and has community-wide effects. A mutual infection between history and fiction is what Defoe and Camus achieve and, as Felman recognises, the context of their publications, the very real histories to which they allude, make them all the more compelling even if, as in Camus's case, this is enacted through a troubling analogy.

To write plague is to struggle against it and to overcome the stultifying effects it can have on language. It is a creative endeavour; a way to testify to the dreadful consequences plague brings and to the possibility of surviving them. In this respect, plague's effects are also to bring about a vitalisation of language and narrative in the plethora of stories it provides, retrospectively told by the narrator. Nevertheless, plague compels the writing: when plague retreats, the narrative tale is at an end. Plague brings into being the witness and the writing; it creates a community of sufferers for whom the witness speaks. For the plague texts of Defoe and Camus, this blends history and fiction in ways which are as seductively moving as they could, in some contexts, be considered dangerous due to their intervention in and creative appropriation and reinscription of historical accounts and experiences. As this examination of their texts has shown, plague infects not just its victims but also the discourse of those who speak of it, showing its symptoms in style, in narrative tone and through the circumscriptions which arrive in the writing with the introduction of plague. 'By their symptoms you will know them', warns Doctor Pierson in William Burroughs's *Cities of the Red Night*, a plague text that inscribes the virus of which it tells in its disorderly structure, its sexually explicit, frenzied, mutating, apocalyptic and, at points, narratively incomprehensible way. Pierson's diagnostic advice could be applied to plague narratives as much as to the victims they memorialise: to write of plague is to engage in those bubonic narratives I have named episodemics; it is to parasitise and then to be a corpus for others to feed upon; it is to suffer, either obsession, as with Defoe's paranoid and repetitive warnings of the plague-to-come, or from the vicissitudes Camus coped with through his writer's block. The creative writing of plague encounters the limits of creative language but demonstrates that they can be overcome. Plague is insistent, noisy, emotive and also, sometimes, silent in its effects; for the writer of plague, it is a peculiarly challenging and creative encounter.

2
The Politics of Plague Theatre: Artaud, Čapek and Camus

> As for the common people and a large proportion of the bourgeoisie, they presented a much more pathetic *spectacle*, for the majority of them were constrained, either by their poverty or the hope of survival, to remain in their houses. Being confined to their own parts of the city, they fell ill daily in their thousands, and since they had no one to assist them or attend to their needs, they inevitably perished almost without exception. Many dropped dead in the open streets, both by day and by night, whilst a great many others, though dying in their own houses, drew their neighbours' attention to the fact more by the smell of their rotting corpses than by any other means. And what with these, and the others who were dying all over the city, bodies were here, there and everywhere.[1]
>
> (Italics mine)

Thus writes Giovanni Boccaccio of the 1348 Florentine plague which sets the stage for the meeting of ten young people who are to tell the multiple stories of *The Decameron*. Boccaccio's use of the word 'spectacle' intimates that the effects of plague have an inherent theatricality, a fact which has not gone unnoticed by twentieth-century playwrights. Staging plague has political dimensions; such indeed is the case for the theatrical texts under discussion here, in Antonin Artaud's essay 'Theatre and the Plague' (1933) and two anti-fascist plays: the Czech writer Karel Čapek's drama *The White Plague* (1937) and Albert Camus's *State of Siege* (1948). As drawn upon by Artaud, Camus and Čapek, plague partakes in a legacy that was already established in Elizabethan plague tracts,

which in their turn invoked Biblical references. The theatrical plague legacy survives to resurface again decades after these three playwrights in the AIDS plays that are considered towards the end of this chapter. Such plague texts dramatically confirm Margaret Healy's assertion that '[d]isease and politics are, in fact, inseparable'.[2]

Responses to plague epidemics polarise: on the one hand, there is the official, institutional reaction which the authorities organise and police. This is typically the confinement and observation of the plague infected and the quarantining, often upon a large scale, of those exposed to them. The population is scrutinised, measured, counted, treated and disposed of when dead: emergency edicts sanction state control. On the other hand, there exists the millennially inflected anarchy and hedonism notoriously practiced by a minority when faced with an inexplicable disease, resulting in usually short-lived riotousness, drunkenness, crime and a generalised shedding of inhibitions and moral constraints. Both responses constitute dramatic spectacles and no doubt exacerbate one another: enforced confinement provokes deliberate acts of rebellious 'freedom' to be committed; in turn, such acts and events precipitate even tighter regimes of control and punishments for infringements. From Boccaccio to Defoe and beyond, these two very different effects of plague have been noted as occurring side-by-side. In a 1974–5 lecture series showing how the development of increasing numbers of medical categories was a method for the authorities to exert increasing control over their populations, Michel Foucault sees plague quarantines as a crucial catalyst for ushering in models and practices of greater institutional surveillance over the sick and abnormal. There is a military flavour to such policed and measured quarantines: they replicate society under dictatorships. Foucault also recognises the other response, what he calls plague's 'literary or theatrical dream of the great orgiastic moment'.[3] Before Foucault formalised these observations into an argument about the history of medicine, however, they had been noted in less systematic ways within historical accounts of plague epidemics: Boccaccio writes of the debauched and uncaring revelries of those who choose to ignore the disease, as well as the prevalence of robbery and squatting, while across Europe plague measures of quarantining, enclosure and confinement were instituted early on in outbreaks and they were surprisingly well organised and documented, given the problems faced and the lack of medical knowledge.[4] These two responses to plague are not irreconcilable, nor is one simply literary while the other is factual and military: plague has the potential to stimulate and accommodate both. Theatrical, and thus 'literary', representations of plague can also

summon what Foucault calls the dream of a 'marvellous moment when political power is exercised to the full' (47).[5] We see this in the plays of Camus and Čapek, which draw an analogy between life under dictatorships and life during plague outbreaks in a way that is similar to the allegorical use of the disease in Camus's novel *The Plague*, discussed in Chapter 1. Artaud, on the other hand, stresses the more orgiastic response to plague and its effects.

Plague's early modern reputation

Plague and its results constitute a spectacle; they have a high and theatrically fertile visibility. While this may appear an obvious conclusion, it has a perhaps surprising corollary in English theatrical history: during the Elizabethan upsurge in theatre, a period when the first permanent public playhouses were built in London and when plague had an almost continual presence and regularly reached epidemic proportions, representations of plague outbreaks were absent from the stage.[6] In Shakespeare, for example, the words 'plague' and 'pestilence' have a fairly frequent recurrence yet they are mostly employed as curses or generalised expressions of woe and calamity.[7] One of Shakespeare's plays that carries the most direct plague references and includes much talk of infection and pestilence is *Timon of Athens*, a play commonly believed by critics to be left unfinished and of which there is no record of performance at all. Its inclusion in the 1623 first folio is even thought to be because it was a hasty replacement for *Troilus and Cressida*, dropped due to copyright difficulties.[8] The eponymous protagonist, Timon, is a generous Athenian nobleman who treats his friends to banquets and gifts, accepts without perspicuity their flattery, and is subsequently embittered at their desertion when his wealth runs dry. Leaving Athens destitute, Timon curses the town and its inhabitants:

> Plagues incident to men,
> Your potent and infectious fevers heap
> On Athens, ripe for stroke!
>
> (IV, i, 21–33)

This plague is named a 'general leprosy' only a few lines later (30). From the earth to the air, Timon summons miasmas (IV, iii, 1–3), commonly connected with plague infection in Shakespeare's time, but when he meets Alcibiades and the whores on their way to attack Athens, he is clearly using 'plague' as a sobriquet for syphilis in his witty encouragement to the women to conquer through disease:[9]

Plague all,
That your activity may defeat and quell
The source of all erection.

(IV, iii, 162–4)

The most common use of plague, in *Timon* as in the other plays, is to curse: Timon's vitriolic gravestone epitaph reads 'a plague consume you, wicked caitiffs left!' (V, iv, 71).

From these uses of disease and infection in *Timon* emerges a picture in which plague is a less specific disease than syphilis or leprosy: it is more generalised. The key to this is given in a line towards the end of the play, when the senators beg Timon to return to help save Athens from Alcibiades's impending attack. Seeing in their request an impure motivation since they offer to re-establish his name only in return for his assistance, Timon replies to their greeting: 'I thank them, and would send them back the plague, / Could I but catch it for them' (V, i, 136–7). The Elizabethans knew that leprosy was contagious through touch and syphilis through sex, but how plague was caught continued to be a mystery to them. Debates raged about competing miasma and contagion theories, edicts prevented crowds assembling and the infected from leaving their houses, but the fact remained plain to all that in some houses every person caught plague whereas in others only one died, despite a whole family being confined with the victim for the twenty-eight day quarantine. Hence, although plague was a horrific disease and a real risk to life, its troublesome aetiology meant it was figuratively less concrete. No wonder, then, that it was commonly used to curse: in cursing one appeals either to a higher power or to the magical performativity of words themselves, but either way, it is to locate the disease's transmission outside an understanding of individual interpersonal contagion.

In none of Shakespeare's plays does plague, as a disease, actually strike a character or afflict a community. One of the most straightforward explanations for this is that the playhouses were closed by the authorities during epidemic plague outbreaks for fear of crowds increasing the spread of infection: when death tolls reached over 30 a week from plague, there was no work for the players.[10] If people and players alike were kept away from theatres for fear of plague, a company was unlikely to stage a representation of the disease as soon as they were given the all clear to return to the potentially unsafe space of the playhouse. The reliance of the companies upon the authorities or influential patrons for permission to reopen the theatres and for supplementary payment in times of plague and unemployment probably further ensured a disinclination

to present anything that would raise disapproval or be open to the accusation of scare-mongering by those who wielded the power to close them down indefinitely.

To accompany these possible political and financial motivations for the elision of plague representations, it has been suggested that plague offered less potential for the playwright than syphilis, the other scourge of Elizabethan society. As a sexual disease syphilis had a moral dimension that plague lacked. Louis F. Qualtiere and William W. E. Slights take this view:

> The plague had become too generalised a scourge of God by Shakespeare's time to make effective theater. It served well enough for a remote narrative of mass fatality but the pox had far greater potential on the stage to represent protracted suffering, to complicate plots, and to evoke scornful laughter and moral disapproval.[11]

For the Elizabethans, plague victims were randomly stricken and although it was usually considered, as Qualtiere and Slights observe, to be a punishment from God, the reasons given for this were societal not individual, whereas syphilis was a disease that directly punished the licentious and lascivious, being known to be common in brothels.[12] As these critics highlight, it had comic possibilities that the tragedy of plague lacked; it could also be represented as a just return for individual sexual depravity. Plague was for the pulpit or the pamphlet; syphilis the stage.[13] That plague had become 'too generalised', in the appraisal of Qualtiere and Slights, accords with its loss of specificity, as demonstrated in *Timon*. Like Thomas Dekker, some Elizabethan playwrights who put syphilis upon the stage also wrote plague pamphlets, and they partook in the tendency to personify plague that was common in such tracts. Margaret Healy discusses plague as a metaphoric tyrant in 'Defoe's Journal and the English Plague Writing Tradition':

> In Dekker, for example, plague is a merciless, cruel tyrant – a type of Marlowe's Tamberlaine – first laying siege to, then ravaging London. H. F.'s descriptions [in Defoe's *A Journal of the Plague Year*] are equally militaristic and graphic. … There is certainly a traditional element to these representations. We only have to think of the threatening 'snare of the hunter' in the ninety-first psalm – the most commonly quoted psalm in plague time.[14]

Plague in this role has echoes of the military response to its outbreaks which so fascinates Foucault. In fact, the reaction that plague precipitated from

the authorities, the monitoring and quarantining of the people, becomes figured as part of its personification: a tyrant who lays siege, plague waits and watches its immobile and helpless prey, just as the authorities did the infected victims. The measures plague elicits from those who seek to stymie its effects, the military ordering and medical surveillance, come to constitute the character of the disease in early modern and, as we shall see, in some twentieth-century representations. Syphilis, in contrast, did not require such personification or metaphorisation: the symptoms and longevity of the disease turned its victims themselves into walking caricatures of the pox, with their balding heads and rotting noses.

It is clear from Healy that the conjunction of plague with dictatorial characteristics is old and established. While plague's appearance and routes of infection may have been mysterious to the Elizabethans, it was not a 'new' disease as the 'French' pox was and it already had an established set of associative images and texts, embodiments and allusions. Paul Ricoeur's extensive work on metaphor and its functions suggests that this lack of novelty actually disarms plague's dramatic possibilities. For a trope to be truly metaphorical, according to Ricoeur, it has to be a coupling that is innovative:

> To say that a metaphor is not drawn from anywhere is to recognise it for what it is: namely, a momentary creation of language, a semantic innovation which does not have a status in language as something already established, whether as a designation or as a connotation.[15]

Hence, perhaps, plague's Elizabethan invisibility upon the stage directly resulted from its visibility in the London streets and from the existence of a historical and religious discourse which had already claimed the disease for its own, making it at once harder to 'reinvent' or reinvigorate for the stage and probably encouraging its drift into a more generalised register of disaster. This legacy of invisibility, the suggestion that plague may not be effectively representable on the stage, does not disappear with the Elizabethans but reappears in the twentieth-century when playwrights begin to use plague in three distinct ways: to explore the effects of dictatorships, to reinvigorate theatrical practice and to raise awareness about AIDS.

If plague lacked theatrical kudos on the Elizabethan stage, in the 1930s and 1940s three playwrights saw within it a capacity for portraying, criticising and commenting upon political regimes and systems of control. The texts of Artaud, Camus and Čapek engage theatre to propound social and political messages or to achieve change in these

areas; all three call upon images, analogies or embodiments of plague. Covering a ten-year period which saw the rise of Nazism, the outbreak of civil war in Spain, the emerging horror of the Holocaust and the advent and eventual end of the Second World War, the dates of these three texts unavoidably mark any reading, performance or interpretation. It was a period during which Europe experienced the dictatorships of Hitler, Mussolini and Franco; a period in which the very contours of European countries were redrawn and the threat of invasion carried with it a fear of cultural, ideological and even physical contagion. Much war propaganda stressed the dire cultural consequences of occupation, often expressed in forms of retrenched nationalism, while Nazi anti-Semitism openly articulated fears of racial contamination. Both *The White Plague* and *State of Siege* specifically invoke and explore these fears; both plays, indeed, portray dictatorships that operate in tandem with plague. Published just before the Second World War, Čapek's *The White Plague* is set in a war-mongering dictatorship that is also in the midst of a mysterious and deadly epidemic; published after the war, Camus' *State of Siege* is set in a Spanish town where people begin to die of plague. Soon after, a character called Plague arrives, takes over government of the town and institutes a dictatorship only to be beaten, eventually, by one romantic hero and his journey to an inspiring liberation from the fear of death. Directly linking plague and dictatorships as they do, Čapek and Camus's representations operate within the historical imagining of plague as a tyrant which is noted above by Healy. In contrast, Antonin Artaud used plague as an inspiration for new theatrical experiences which have more in common with what Foucault termed, with a footnote expressly referencing Artaud, 'a kind of orgiastic dream … [and] the literary dream of plague' (47).

Artaud's revolutionary theatre-as-plague

In the opening pages of 'Theatre and the Plague' Artaud stresses the coincidence of plague, which he will go on to link to the theatre, with times of political tumult, giving examples of how a change of government in Japan in 660 BC and political upheaval in Provence in 1502 were both accompanied by plagues. The causal link between these phenomena rests upon the contention that times of conflict and upheaval, political or natural, are also times when a more powerful imagery can be released in the minds of the people. This leads Artaud to propose that '[w]hatever may be the errors of historians or physicians concerning the plague [*la peste*], I believe we can agree upon the idea of a malady

[*une maladie*] that would be a kind of psychic entity, and would not be carried by a virus'.[16] Events like plague which usher in social change, when people behave in ways contrary to sense, contrary to their usual social roles, are collectively experienced events with powerful psychic consequences.

Artaud was writing at a time when politics was becoming increasingly aestheticised; his response was to argue that a radical reformulation of theatre as cruelty, as 'life', is intrinsically revolutionary. Plague and theatre are able to release the capacity for imagery normally latent to come to the surface and 'from this spiritual freedom with which the plague develops, without rats, without microbes, and without contact, can be deduced the sombre and absolute action of a spectacle' (23) ['*Mais de cette liberté spirituelle, avec laquelle la peste se développe, sans rats, sans microbes et sans contacts, on peut tirer le jeu absolu et sombre d'un spectacle*' (22)]. The outbreak of plague, the breaking out of theatre from its constricted and bourgeois practice, is also an outbreak of 'dormant images' and 'latent disorder':

> These symbols are symbols of full-blown powers held in bondage until that moment and unusable in real life, exploding in the guise of incredible images giving existence and the freedom of the city to acts naturally opposed to social life.
>
> (18–19)

If 'acts naturally opposed to social life' has a destructive ring to it, then it must be realised that for Artaud social life itself, which encompasses culture, was suffering from 'a generalized collapse … at the root of our present demoralisation' (7). The elite appease themselves with an inauthentic culture-substitute; Artaud argues that instead culture should be an organic, internal growth, 'like a new organ, a sort of second breath' (8). The tyrant is therefore not a dictator nor a plague but the cultural elite and its products which rule over aesthetic sensibilities. Drawing upon language and imagery with a spiritual, mythical and sensual orientation is part of Artaud's challenge to this tyrannical domination of conventional culture.

Isolating and enumerating all the instances in 'Theatre and the Plague' where Artaud highlights the similarity of the two phenomena bring out the specificity of his analogy: theatre and plague are alike because they induce a communicative delirium (27); they affect 'important collectivities and [upset] them in an identical way' (27), with the resulting sense of community or collective experience being a crucial component.

Artaud also personifies theatre and plague as 'victorious and vengeful' (27) and posits that within their experience latent images are taken and extended into 'the most extreme gestures' which 'reforge the chain between what is and what is not, between the virtuality of the possible and what already exists in materialized nature' (27). Thus plague and theatre can prompt important and powerful imaginative possibilities to open in ways which simply do not happen in everyday life. They are even offered as models to stimulate access to our deep psychic disturbances, for plague and theatre constitute 'a formidable call to the forces that impel the mind by example to the source of its conflicts' (30). This, in turn, causes 'the revelation, the bringing forth, the exteriorization of a depth of latent cruelty by means of which all the perverse possibilities of the mind, whether of an individual or a people, are localized' (30). No wonder, then, that Artaud thinks they precipitate a 'time of evil' (30) and 'crisis' (31). However, the overall experience is revolutionary, revelatory:

> It [theatre, like plague] releases conflicts, disengages powers, liberates possibilities, and if these possibilities and these powers are dark, it is the fault not of plague nor of the theatre, but of life itself.
>
> (31)

Although these similarities appear dangerous and destructive, it is important to remember that for Artaud the theatre is a space in which these 'outbreaks' work to remove the need for them to occur outside, in social reality. His contention in 'The Theatre and the Plague' that it takes more for the actor not to commit murder than it does for the murderer to do so is not meant as a rhetorical gesture of excess: Artaud believed that 'the action and effect of a feeling in the theatre appears infinitely more valid than that of a feeling fulfilled in life' (25). This is the spirit in which we are solicited to understand that 'the theatre teaches precisely the uselessness of the action which, once done, is not to be done, and the superior use of the state unused by the action and which *restored*, produces a purification' (82). Theatre re-harnesses violence, crises and latent forces, performing in the theatrical space what 'is not to be done' and inducing a state the energy of which becomes inwardly purifying as opposed to outwardly destructive. Such purposes resemble the uses of the scapegoat ritual which René Girard believes wards off wider societal violence and which he links to plague and to the Sophoclean plague play *Oedipus the King*; this is discussed further in Chapters 3 and 5. The constellation of these citations powerfully demonstrates how Artaud saw the theatre as an experience, a release or outbreak, of the energy which

is life itself but which is sublimated and suppressed the rest of the time or, alternatively, expended in violent crimes. In Artaud's theatre, plague is not represented as such: it *is* theatre. Plague is theatrical, and theatre is plaguelike in its spectacle and its psychical effects. To link theatre's effects with those of plague in this way is an audacious coupling, deliberately offensive to middle-class sensibilities. Artaud's theatre is risky and ambitious, violent and disturbing and, potentially, impossible. Yet, it is strangely moral in its projected results: those who go through this theatre-as-plague experience are purified and the energy they may have used for performing violent acts has been transformed into theatre.

In as much as it was about life itself for Artaud, theatre was not about tackling politics or political issues, but instead intrinsically encompassed the political: theatre revitalised thinking, beginning as a cultural idea which was 'first of all a protest' (9). To describe Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty as political is only accurate in the sense which the philosopher and critical theorist Theodor Adorno conceives of political art: not as agitating for a particular cause, but as a seismic shaking of the foundations upon which theatre and art have been based:

> Committed art in the proper sense is not intended to generate ameliorative measures, legislative acts or practical institutions – like earlier propaganda plays against syphilis, duels, abortion laws or borstals – but to work at the level of fundamental attitudes.[17]

In 'Nietzsche, Artaud, and Tragic Politics', Geoffrey Baker sees exactly such a commitment in Artaud's theatre: 'Artaud's blueprints for drama contribute to a transformative tragic politics that seeks to overcome unpalatable social regimes by interrogating the epistemological formations and structures of representation from which they spring'.[18] Practically speaking, this idealist adherence of Artaud's caused tensions with his fellow artists in the Surrealist group of which he was a member for a short period. The rift came about because Artaud disagreed with André Breton over an attempt to fuse the movement with Communist politics; whereas Breton thought art and politics could work hand in hand, with the former reflecting the concerns of the latter, Artaud was committed to the experience of art itself having political and social ramifications, outside of party politics.

Theatre should be inclusive, transformative, relevant and popular; it should be a community contagion, felt and participated in by everyone, across classes, not only by those already familiar with theatre and its norms. For Artaud the idea of an audience passively consuming a stage spectacle is an anathema which does nothing to challenge what Adorno

calls the 'fundamental attitudes' that need to be changed. As Artaud wrote in a letter to Benjamin Crémieux:

> But this conception of the theatre, which consists of having people sit on a certain number of straight-backed or overstuffed chairs placed in a row and tell each other stories, however marvellous, is, if not the absolute negation of theater – which does not absolutely require movement in order to be what it should – certainly its perversion. (106)

Artaud's near contemporary, Bertolt Brecht, had a similar criticism of the conditions under which spectators absorbed the theatrical experience and a similar commitment to changing them, albeit in different ways. In his 1947–8 text 'A Short Organum for the Theatre' Brecht writes:

> [W]e can hardly accept the theatre as we see it before us. Let us go into one of these houses and observe the effect which it has on the spectators. Looking about us, we see somewhat motionless figures in a peculiar condition: they seem strenuously to be tensing all their muscles, except where these are flabby and exhausted. They scarcely communicate with each other; their relations are those of a lot of sleepers, though of such as dream restlessly because, as is popularly said of those who have nightmares, they are lying on their backs. True, their eyes are open, but they stare rather than see, just as they listen rather than hear. They look at the stage as if in a trance: an expression which comes from the Middle Ages, the days of witches and priests. Seeing and hearing are activities, and can be pleasant ones, but these people seem relieved of activity like men to whom something is being done.[19]

As with Artaud, the criticism of conventional spectatorship outlined here is that it involves no communication between spectators: each viewer receives the performance in a passive, individualised state very far from Artaud's desire for an infectious group revelation. Artaud's answer to this passivity was to disrupt the removed and impotent relationship to the stage by abolishing it altogether, making stage and auditorium all one site so that 'a direct communication will be re-established between the spectator and the spectacle, between the actor and the spectator, from the fact that the spectator, placed in the middle of the action, is engulfed and physically affected by it' (96).

Theatre, like plague, should have no barriers to the infection it is capable of spreading. A collective 'agitation' (85), which occurs in plague times too, was to cause a revelatory experience – and vision – of

the self and of society through which people could transcend their usual dispositions and characters:

> [F]rom the human view point, the action of the theater, like that of the plague, is beneficial, for, impelling men to see themselves as they are, it causes the mask to fall, reveals the lie, the slackness, the baseness, and hypocrisy of our world; it shakes off the asphyxiating inertia of matter which invades even the clearest testimony of the senses; and in revealing to collectivities of men their dark power, their hidden force, it invites them to take, in the face of destiny, a superior and heroic attitude they would never have assumed without it.
>
> (32)

Despite the darkness and the violence – even the mysticism – of the language and imagery he employs, Artaud's theatrical ideas are essentially hopeful, for theatre and for those involved in it. The outcome promises to be ennobling, involving a more honest appraisal of 'men' and their capabilities: through confronting the depth and darkness of human power, these same men will choose a better 'attitude'. That, at least, is the ideal presented in 'Theatre and the Plague'. How this experience of theatre is to be induced and the content of such a collective performance are not apparent: Artaud's is a theory of theatre-affect. As such, then, he does not seek to stage plague or even to represent it; instead plague is used as a powerful way of figuring the potentials of drama. A curious footnote to Artaud's conception is the tale of the text's perhaps sole performance. Gathered in the Sorbonne to hear its author read 'Theatre and the Plague', the audience was surprised to be subjected to Artaud groaning, writhing on the floor and screaming in mock agony, as though himself stricken with plague. According to Anaïs Nin, who sat in the front row of this spectacle, the response of the people watching was laughter, hissing and jeering.[20]

Plague figures fascism in order to fight it

A very different approach to plague and the stage, one more in line with the Elizabethan figuration of plague as a tyrant, is taken by the anti-fascist plays of Karel Čapek and Albert Camus. Much of Čapek's *The White Plague* (1937) is set in the public clinic of Doctor Galen and the prestigious medical institute of the play's unnamed dictatorship. Top doctors are fascinated but baffled by a new and deadly disease; the population are scared or complacent, depending upon their age, for only

those over forty-five years old can be stricken. In terms of symptoms, the play's white plague, or Cheng Virus, mixes the fantasy of an age-determined disease and the white, 'cold as marble' leprosy spot with recognisable plague-effects such as bodily sepsis and the medical strategies of mass containment and quarantine.[21] A clear societal allegory is enacted: the bodies of the people are sick because so is the regime under which they exist with complicity. The play stages a parade of self-interest starkly apparent in the multiple reactions to plague: doctors search for a cure in order to advance their careers; the middle-class population, while healthy, are happy to benefit from the job vacancies created by the death of their seniors but, when ill, expect sympathy and demand exceptional treatment. The dictator and those who underpin his regime – like the munitions baron – are only interested in war and the profits it brings; since the old do not contribute to such aims, their deaths are of little consequence until these powerful middle-aged men are personally struck by plague. The ending is bleak: despite an eventual decision in favour of a change for peace, made by the dying dictator's daughter, the only existing antidote is crushed underfoot by a crowd shouting enthusiastically for their dictator and the European war he began. Throughout, plague is aligned with the dictatorship: its unique aetiology preserves the younger generation necessary for the military and expansionist ambitions of a regime on the brink of an enormous offensive war at the opening of the play. As the military Marshal states of his population: 'I'm not interested in them when they get old. … They are no good to me as soldiers' (314). The elderly are dispensable so the disease attacks them; peace is not congruent with economic or military imperialism so plague remains active and at large while these are political priorities. War and disease are coupled together against their conjoined opposites, peace and health. These alignments and polarities go largely unexamined by the represented population: in response to a tentative defence of peace and health, a husband warns his wife: 'Preaching against war is against our sacred interests, understand?' and, in a definitive conjunction of plague and fascist war, he concludes '[i]f I had to choose between the plague and peace, I'd pick the plague!' (297).

The White Plague centres upon a moral dilemma posed to the dictatorship by one person, Doctor Galen, who perceives that a cure for plague can be traded for peace. Galen is a pauper's physician with a developed and successful antidote to the white plague, but he refuses to treat the rich or reveal his formula to the medical community: the latter, he fears, would exploit his findings as their own and thus remove the possibility that Galen sees for securing peace. The name of this doctor alludes to

the early physician and influential medical writer Galen of Pergamon (AD 129 – c. 200/210), whose theories informed the medieval and Renaissance understanding of the body, impacting medical practices right up until the 1800s. Extending the theory of the bodily humours and their need for balance, as Margaret Healy explains, Galen's doctrine stressed that internal bodily equilibrium was achieved through an adherence to a way of life which avoided excess:

> In *On Initial Causes* Galen postulated that the initial cause of infectious disease was something external – 'seeds of plague' – which, impinging on and entering the human body, served to imbalance the four humours of certain bodies, leading to incapacity and sickness. … The harmful effects of exposure to contagion could not, however, occur without another initial cause, unwise regimen.[22]

Disease, from this perspective, carries moral implications since behaviour is interpreted as a contributing factor in infection rates. Indeed, the attribution of blame in relation to lifestyle choices has never left the general rhetoric employed to describe threatening diseases, as was seen during the early period of the AIDS outbreak when the disease was depicted as specifically linked to 'promiscuous' homosexual practices and racial minorities in the US.[23] Čapek incorporates this moral element of blame by staging Galen's ethical challenge to the political and economic powers of the dictatorship: either war continues, in which case he will not release his antidote to any but those in extreme poverty or peace is instigated and he will treat anyone and everyone, even those who are responsible for propagating war, such as the infected munitions capitalist Baron Krug and, finally, the stricken military dictator. Neither of these men buckle: the Baron shoots himself rather than acquiesce to Galen's terms; the dictator resists peace although his daughter and her lover override his decision, despite his protests. In the end, however, it is the crowd that destroys the cure which would save them, attacking Galen, leaving him most probably dead and smashing the ampoules of antidote as they shout 'Hurrah for the war!' and 'Long live the Marshal!' (327). The infectiousness of national rhetoric, crude patriotism and senseless group violence against an outsider fill the distasteful final moments delivered by Čapek's pessimistic and prophetic play. War and disease are inevitable; plague and fascism work hand-in-hand: this is the implicit political warning presented in dystopic form to an audience who had not, as yet, seen the start of the Second World War.

Camus's *State of Siege* (1948), in contrast, is a post-war text but it preserves the link between plague and dictatorship. Performed a year after the publication of his novel *The Plague*, the play is set in the Spanish town of Cadiz, generating interpretations of it as a comment upon the takeover of power by Franco, an event condemned by Camus on many occasions in his journalism for the left-wing magazine *Combat*. Peaceful Cadiz is disturbed by a comet and then by the beginning of a plague outbreak which the inefficient and bureaucratic administration is unable to comprehend properly or contain. They capitulate quickly to the rule of the Plague, a personified military dictator who arrives after the first wave of the epidemic, dressed in uniform, with a medal and accompanied by a secretary whose notebook carries a list of the town's inhabitants. She is able to kill them at will by crossing their names out; the deadly duo achieve their coup through a ruthless demonstration of their ability to infect and kill immediately and selectively. From the first, the 'state control' which the Plague establishes in Cadiz has a military flavour.[24] The town gates are closed and new regulations are instituted with all the hallmarks of a tightly controlled dictatorship: food rationing, a curfew, a divisive set of rewards for those who report the illness of friends and family, the segregation of men from women and a bureaucratic system of such complexity and far-reaching intrusion that citizens are required to obtain certificates of existence [*certificates d'existence*] (232). This, as the secretary maintains, is 'an excellent way of making public what has got to cease being private' (176). Prisoners of the state are compelled to build 'great useless public works' (181) and the watchwords of the Plague are '[e]xecution, occupation, concentration' [*Ils s'exécutent, ils s'occupent, ils se concentrent*] (183/243). Given the date of *State of Siege*'s first performance (1948), the slogan must have had a sinister resonance for recently liberated French audiences. In certain respects, though, Camus's play is hopeful: the young, central character Diego finally combats and defeats Plague and his secretary, freeing Cadiz from their rule through his realisation that their control only lasts for as long as people fear them. He rouses the population – represented in their collectivity through the use of a Chorus – to throw off the gags the Plague has decreed they wear. Finally, though, Diego loses his own life in exchange for that of his lover, a deal he makes with the Plague after his newfound liberation from the fear of death.

Associating plague with political and military dictatorships enacts a strong condemnation of such regimes. Both Čapek and Camus were anti-Nazi, the former writing *The White Plague* as Czechoslovakia became increasingly threatened by the military aims of Hitler's foreign policy,

the latter actively fighting Nazism in the French Resistance. Given its date, Čapek's play operated as a form of 'warning to beware', familiar from and well-established within Renaissance plague tracts which sought to link the outbreak of plague to pertinent moral issues in society or to political events.[25] In this context, *The White Plague* can be read as an attempt at political and social intervention which moves the theatre out of the realm of entertainment and into that of propaganda, albeit for a type of left-thinking insightfulness as to the potential future threat Nazi Germany posed to Czechoslovakia. The final scene of the play, with Galen attacked and crushed, the antidote lost and the crowd cheering the dictatorship, leaves no hope for peace or cure. Czechoslovakia's capitulation to the Nazis was greeted with dismay by the prophetic Čapek, whose brother outlived him only to die in the Belsen concentration camp.[26] *State of Siege*, performed after the end of the Second World War, represents instead the defeat and retreat of plague, a possible celebration of France's eventual freedom from the tyranny and socio-political sickness of Nazi occupation. At least one director, dressing the Plague as a Nazi, endorsed this interpretation. Camus, indeed, claimed it was a play about 'liberty' (ix), yet the setting of Cadiz implies a more pessimistic outcome when read against the backdrop of Franco's Spain and, although plague is defeated, the conditions for plague's return are re-established when the old administration take up the reins of power again.

Michel Foucault saw that prevailing conditions under plague and under dictatorships have much in common. As noted, he identified an 'orgiastic moment' inspired by plague which he labels the 'literary' or 'theatrical dream' (47). In Čapek and Camus we see little of the orgiastic, although its seeds are there in the group scenes, the Marshal-cheering crowds and the lamenting choruses. What the playwrights give very clearly is a theatrical enactment of what Foucault names the 'dream of a military society' which accompanies plague because:

> [the disease] also brings the political dream of an exhaustive, unobstructed power that is completely transparent to its object and exercised to the full. You can see that there is a connection between the dream of a military society and the dream of a plague-stricken society, between both of these dreams born in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. (47)

The necessity for strict social control and segregation of the sick during epidemics meant that usual social freedoms and rights were often suspended or curtailed, as they are in the dictatorships portrayed by Camus

and Čapek. Defoe, in *A Journal of the Plague Year*, details the practice of shutting up the houses of plague sufferers as well as the problems posed by curfews and the checkpoints placed around the gates of London. In *The White Plague* the camps for the sick are a precursor to Nazi concentration camps; those with the white spot will be contained until their death, although the medical officer is quick to assert that this quarantining will be done '[h]umanely. Under proper medical supervision', before adding, '[a]nyone attempting to escape will be shot' (301). Similarly, in *State of Siege*, a distraught woman who demands to know the whereabouts of her husband is told by the Plague that he has been deported with other troublesome members of society, in language which cannot but allude to the Nazi camps: 'I have concentrated them. They have been living at a loose end, frittering their time away, dispersing their energies. Now they've been pulled together, they are *concentrated*' (182–3). The outward randomness with which plague strikes and kills has its corollary in the unexplained 'disappearances' of various members of society under a military dictatorship, seen not just in fascist Germany but also in the operation of Stalin's Gulags and later in Pinochet's Chile. Those who have been 'concentrated' in this way are no longer able to infect society with their 'frittering', with their otherness, with their disease. People in plague times live in suspicion of each other, suspicion of infection which in turn infects their humanity: just as the Father in *The White Plague* refuses to allow his wife to take soup to the woman dying upstairs, so too in *State of Siege* the judge refuses to protect and hide from the Plague's guards his daughter's fiancé, Diego. Fear, suspicion and an overwhelming preoccupation with the 'health' of a nation are prevalent conditions during plagues and under dictatorships.

The body metaphor: Strong heads and compliant bodies

The nation as a body which can either be sick or healthy is a convenient metaphor for dictatorships since their organisational structure positions the leader as the guiding and directing head of the masses, 'the body' that follows his orders, 'embodying' his will. In Čapek's and Camus's dictatorships the Marshal and the Plague are the respective Heads of State of the body politic, representing the sickness that is already embedded in the societies they are ruling. This model is a historically traditional one for politics partly because, as the anthropologist Mary Douglas outlines in her seminal study *Purity and Danger* (1966), it clearly translates a contingent system of power and, as in the

dictatorships under discussion, a repressive form of power, into the naturalised imagery of the body:

> The body is a model which can stand for any bounded system. Its boundaries can represent any boundaries which are threatened or precarious. The body is a complex structure. The functions of its different parts and their relation afford a source of symbols for other complex structures.[27]

This metaphor can then be represented theatrically in the spectacle of mass rallies, such as that of the Nazi Party Congress at Nuremburg in 1934, shown in Leni Reinfenstahl's propaganda film, *Triumph of the Will*. The film begins by parading the different limbs of the Nazi party: the Youth brigade; the workers; the horsemen and the SS; the traditionally dressed women and peasants. The unity of the party is then represented in the orderly marching, singing, saluting and groupings of enormous numbers of uniformed people in gigantic arenas, all building up to the moment when Hitler, the head of the party, is to address the body of people laid out below him from his elevated and illuminated platform. As articulated by a Nazi orator and greeted with cheering from the crowds: 'The Party is Hitler. Germany is Hitler. Hitler is Germany'. This is a staging of the body politic of quite spectacular proportions, making full use of the lighting, symbolism and dramatic tension which are ordinarily tools of the theatre. The rhetorical apostrophising of the crowd, another theatrical device with a crossover into the political, completes the spectacle of dictatorship in Reinfenstahl's film and accords with the warning of the Plague in *State of Siege* that 'words are carriers of infection' (169). The potentially fascinating spectacle of a dictatorial show such as those staged in Nuremberg has much in common therefore with the theatrical experience. As Hans-Ulrich Thamer writes of the NSDAP rallies, '[t]hey became a symbol for mass orchestration and mass fascination, as well as for the pseudo-religious character of the National Socialist movement'.[28] In the spectacle these rallies provided and the fascination they provoked in their spectators there is something of the trance effect which Brecht is quick to excoriate in the audience of the average theatre house. The power of these fascinating mass rallies is testified to by the right-wing French theatre critic Robert Brasillach, who eventually embraced National Socialism because of its 'poetry'. In her essay 'Resisting the Plague: The French Reactionary Right and Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty', Constance Spreen explicates: '[a]s Brasillach recounts in *The Seven Colours*, his largely autobiographical novel, Hitler's

choreography of light and sound in the Zepplinfeld ceremony produced the most stunning spectacle the young writer had ever witnessed'.[29] The dangers of succumbing to the Nazi spectacle are historically apparent in the case of Brasillach, who was executed in 1945 for collaborating with the Germans.

The mass fascination of the theatrical fascist spectacle, its exploitation of the body metaphor, raises some rather uncomfortable questions in relation to the dramas of Camus and Čapek. Where, in their representations of fascism, is the audience implicitly situated and, in being apostrophised by the fascist leaders on the stage, are they being aligned with the subjugated but mostly unresisting body of people that make up Cadiz and the Marshal's state? If this is the case, then are they being condemned by Camus and Čapek? Or, in fact, is the theatre, as mobilised by the two playwrights, a space wherein an audience is able to enjoy the spectacle of plague, of political dictatorship, from the safety of their seats in such a way that any critical commentary upon repressive regimes within the plays is, while not entirely lost, then at least severely diluted? Is plague, or indeed fascism, even representable, or in omitting plague from the stage were the Elizabethans responding to an aspect of it that defied effective theatrical representation or dramatisation? For German-Jewish Adorno, writing in 1951, the unrepresentability of fascism is unequivocal:

> The impossibility of portraying Fascism springs from the fact that in it, *as in its contemplation*, subjective freedom no longer exists. Total unfreedom can be recognised but not represented. When freedom occurs as a motif in political narratives today, as in the praise of heroic resistance, it has the embarrassing quality of impotent reassurance.[30]
>
> (Emphasis mine)

Theatrical representation cannot portray the truth of unfreedom inherent in fascism precisely because, as a portrayal, it is a performance and thus actors and spectators alike are at a remove from its real and terrifying conditions: they walk out of the theatre and return freely to their homes. To really contemplate fascism, to really see it, one has to be within it; hence a theatrical representation of fascism will always fail. Within this argument, there is no position 'outside' of fascism which would be able to fully and truly represent its effects. The truth of Adorno's insight equally applies to plague conditions: the horror of an epidemic with an enormous death-count and an established reputation as being beyond cure is not possible to 're-present' on stage in a way that can be participated in fully.

Given that *The White Plague* and *State of Siege* were penned by anti-fascists, it is possible to ask whether the theatre really can be a space for political intervention or comment without an accompanying theory and awareness of theatre-affect informing the playwright's representations. Such a theory would need to address the role of the audience's passive consumption of such 'spectacles' of plague and fascism.

Both Camus and Čapek directly portray with condemnation the passivity, complicity and complacency of Cadiz's population and the Marshal's subjects regarding the political environments in which they are living. For the inhabitants of Camus's Cadiz, it is the existence of this very complacency that enables Plague to enter and impose his rule upon their town. Nada, the drunken, self-proclaimed prophet, berates the terrified people at the beginning of the play after the appearance of a comet, traditionally an ancient plague omen:

> Provided you eat your three meals, work your eight hours a day, and pay the keep of your two women, you think that all is well and you're in step. And so you are, marching in step like a chain-gang, mighty pleased with yourselves, treading the good old beaten track. Only, my worthy friends, don't forget you are marching to calamity.
>
> (140)

As if to reiterate this sentiment, not as a criticism but as an order for a certain collective societal blindness to what has been presaged by the comet's traversal of the sky, the town's herald enters to assuage the people's fears, proclaiming:

> These are the Governor's orders. Let each of you withdraw from hence and return to his work. Good governments are governments under which nothing happens. Thus it is the Governor's will that nothing shall happen here, so that his government may remain benevolent as it has always been. Therefore we appraise you, the townsfolk of Cadiz, that nothing has occurred to justify alarm or discomposure.
>
> (141)

The population is forced by law to deny the comet's appearance. The inaction of the Governor to the omen's traditional role as warning, followed by his speedy resignation of power, enables the takeover by Plague to be effected without protest by the people, who are only able to express an inactive, collective, lamentation of their lot (166). Camus's use of a Chorus, with their continual chant of '[n]othing's changed.

Nothing's happened' (151) after the herald's announcement and the continuation of their collective speeches throughout, serves theatrically to heighten this lack of individual response and lack of dissent. Nada, the only townsman to admit that disaster is looming, is a cripple, a drunk, a 'nothing', as his name implies; a man who, the secretary notes when she later spares his life, 'is the sort who doesn't believe in anything, in other words the sort of man who can be very useful to us' (163). Nada's complacency, in other words, although it may not be blind to events, is just as wilful and dangerous in its inaction as that of the Governor and the townsfolk.

A similar blindness, this time to the reality and death of war, is manifest in the opinions of the characters in *The White Plague*, with the exception, of course, of the peaceable Galen. This is accompanied by a tacit acceptance, toleration, and in some cases, even celebration, of the attendant plague, provided it remained an abstract as opposed to a personal threat. The only character capable of empathy towards plague sufferers, apart from those who suffer themselves, is Galen. Sigelius, head of the medical institute, is intent in his press interview to stress that of all the newly emergent diseases, 'none has hitherto been as interesting as the Cheng virus. It's the disease of the moment!.... And the first case in Europe was diagnosed right here in my clinic! That's something we're extremely proud of, my friend' (266). Čapek uses an anonymous family to represent the middle-class population, and their reaction to the disease is to celebrate the widening opportunities brought about by the plague's destruction. Expressing a self-serving bourgeois aspiration for social and economic ascendancy, the Father greets his promotion, achieved through the plague-death of his superior, by commenting of plague: 'It's helped people like us to get on. Without it we'd be nowhere' (295). The military dictatorship and approaching war generate an enthusiasm embodied by the opinion of the Father who, when asked by his wife whether the country really will wage war, replies: '[w]ith a leader like that it would be a sin not to' (296).

There is a notable difference between the sort of complacency highlighted and critiqued in Čapek and Camus and the bacchanalian response incorporated by Defoe into *A Journal of the Plague Year* and noted by Boccaccio as a route taken by some in reaction to plague. While both reactions involve acquiescence to the fate of plague, the latter, lawless and anarchic, is active while the other is passive. It is this active energy that Foucault terms the 'orgiastic moment' when, instead of caution, people respond with heedless revelry and public disorder. This 'orgiastic moment' is for Artaud the liberating aspect of plague: it is the

point at which the complacency inherent in traditional theatre spectatorship is challenged and theatre's potential is freed. The complacency of the people represented in Camus and Čapek, however, is specifically and self-consciously yoked to the political conditions created by or facilitating fascism. This complacency that fascism breeds is the topic of *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*, written by ex-psychoanalyst Wilheim Reich. First published in 1933, the same year as 'Theatre and the Plague' and a few years before *The White Plague*, Reich's study specifically addresses the psychology of the German people under the Third Reich. His concern is to identify what it is in the psyche of mankind that allows them to accept fascism, despite the fact that logically and rationally this form of political organisation may even work to their economic and social disadvantage. For Reich, as for others, the puzzling acquiescence of the masses to conditions under fascism posed new and difficult challenges to the failed hopes of Marxism. In *The Mass Psychology* Reich advances the argument that man suffers from an 'emotional plague', a form of irrationalism that has been inculcated into mankind's thinking and explains his inability to protest against a system which does not serve his interests:

> The masses of people who work and bear the burden of social existence on their shoulders neither are conscious of their social responsibility nor are they capable of assuming the responsibility for their own freedom. This is the result of the century-long suppression of rational thinking, the natural functions of love, and the scientific comprehension of living. Everything related to the emotional plague in social life can be traced back to this incapacity and lack of consciousness.[31]

The masses Reich describes here have a similarity to the people of Cadiz who Nada accuses of mindlessly 'marching in step like a chain gang'. For Reich, work, like sex, is one of the natural functions of life, but in fascist Germany, with its puritanical emphasis upon family life and its portrayal of work as part of a wider nationalistic project, politics has perverted man's relationship to these areas. The resultant 'emotional plague' fosters a passive and complacent acceptance of what Reich interprets as political irrationalism and sometimes terms the 'fascist plague' (xxi). Providing a particular example of the German worker's irrational thinking, he writes:

> And the German workers regard the planned Baghdad railroad as a *specifically German* achievement. These examples are evidence of the plaguelike nature of the illusory gratification fostered by political irrationalism. … Thus it never enters his [the German worker's] mind

> to help the Chinaman build a railroad. On the contrary, hypnotised by his illusionary nationalistic gratification, he follows some plague-ridden general or another, who wants to *deprive* the Chinese of whatever railroad they have. In this way the emotional plague of politics engenders division and deadly hostility within the same class; in this way it engenders envy, boastfulness, unprincipled conduct and irresponsibility.
>
> (266–7)

While Reich may at best sound reductive and at worst dangerously naïve in his analysis of the international and national economic and expansionist interests of his time, the identification of a plaguelike politics driven by false or enforced nationalism and underpinned by complacency is congruous with the depictions of dictatorships and their effect on the populace laid out by Camus and Čapek in their respective plays. Reich dubs it hypnotism, Brecht likens it to sleep or a trance, yet these are rhetorical names for a common complacent passivity, enthralled to the authority and spectacle of the state on the one hand and the stage on the other.

Present in Reich's analysis of fascist psychology is the averment that Hitler succeeded as dictator only insofar as his ideology, his programme, bore '*a resemblance to the average structure of a broad category of individuals*' (35). Reich's appropriation of plague to name fascism is a direct subversion of Hitler's use of plague in *Mein Kampf* to name the Jews.[32] If we are to follow the proposition that fascism and dictatorships are plaguelike, then according to Reich the responsibility for this lies in the population, not in the leader who almost opportunistically embodies and exploits what is already there in the 'structure' of the masses: a 'fascist plague' is the result for Reich of the 'emotional plague' already at work in the body of society. Yet again the body metaphor is brought into play and related to plague as a way to understand fascism and its success with the people. Reich's sense that plague is already at work in the body of the population has a parallel in *State of Siege* when, under Plague's dictatorship the judge's wife – after a family argument has brought to light a number of infidelities – forewarns: 'The time has come when the buboes have got to burst, and we are not the only ones. The whole city is in the grip of the same fever' (193). It is not that plague has infected every member of Cadiz, for not the whole city contracts the disease; instead it is the city's own plague, its own unacknowledged and complacently ignored buboes, that has allowed the disease inside the gates. In Čapek this presence of plague in society and the complacency of the

population is represented by the family, known only as Father, Mother, Son and Daughter, and their embrace of the opportunities plague brings which reveals their own 'sick' and diseased thinking.

Plague's political consequences

Despite the anti-fascist tone of the plays, despite their criticism of complacency, neither *State of Siege* nor *The White Plague* offers hope for, or a model of, any radically alternative social arrangement, perhaps as a result of Camus's and Čapek's ambivalence towards Communism. Having been a part of the Resistance against Nazi Germany, Camus was openly disgusted by Europe's tolerance of Franco's regime and frustrated by French intellectual defence of the events in Russia in the name of revolutionary expediency. Čapek's commentators characterise him as a relativist and, while he resisted German fascism when it threatened his country, he was also keen to separate himself from the growing Czechoslovak support for Communism: an article he wrote in 1924 entitled 'Why I Am Not a Communist' accuses Communism of being more concerned to achieve power and revolution than help the poor.[33] That both plays were not solely interpreted as attacks upon German fascism is made clear by Camus's comment regarding *State of Siege*: 'this play about liberty is as badly looked upon by dictatorships of the Right as dictatorships of the Left' (ix) and by the fact that Čapek's *The White Plague*, after several decades of being banned under Communist rule between 1948–54, was staged in Bratislava with an anti-American bias which portrayed the dictator as a caricature of President Eisenhower.[34] Thus both plays, despite their pertinence to the political context in which they were first produced, have an evident plasticity which enables them to be appropriated to other intentions, aims and historical or political contexts. This feature is consonant with the general structural repeatability inherent within conventional theatrical drama: the drama text ensures the play can be performed time and again. The use of plague as an analogy for repressive political regimes and their aims draws upon the history of the disease's associations with militarism but, more disturbingly, the inherent repeatability of the drama text reinforces a sundering of plague and dictatorial regimes which makes the latter as unavoidable and as much a part of nature as the former was. As discussed in the previous chapter, Camus's novel *The Plague* similarly uses the fight against the disease as an analogy for the fight against Nazism, lending the regime the dangerous mysteriousness of plague, which, unlike Nazism, comes from nowhere, kills indiscriminately and departs as enigmatically. 'The virus' as Jacques

Derrida comments, writing about AIDS, 'has no age', and there is a less than palatable possibility that despite the warning to beware contained in Camus's and Čapek's works, fascism is lent a concomitant inevitability, an agelessness, by its association with disease, which, viral or otherwise, is always with us, threatening us, parasiting upon us.[35] This would also involve a certain ahistoricisation, an additional level of distance and abstraction from the political realities these plays addressed in their initial moment of production.

Presenting an audience with the spectacle of plague and the spectacle of fascism in conventional theatrical settings allows viewers to partake in the 'consumption' of these events, a consumption which is part of the very bourgeois complacency being attacked in the portrayal of the citizens of Cadiz and the Marshal's state. The Plague and the dictator are represented upon the stage at a remove from the audience: the same vicarious but safe thrill which can be experienced in the consumption of, say, Oedipus's agony in *Oedipus the King* is available to the audiences of *The White Plague* and *State of Siege*. It could be argued that both plays provide a director with the opportunity to consciously include the audience in the 'masses' that are addressed by the Marshal and the Plague, a ploy which would implicate them in the unquestioning or apathetic acceptance of the political situations which both plays stage. However, given the urgency of the times in which these playwrights were working, and the implicit commentary upon those times that their plays politically and theatrically represent, both works leave much to the director's decision-making in terms of the way the audience is situated vis-à-vis the events on stage. Because of their political content and context, *The White Plague* and *State of Siege* remain ambivalent plays. Clearly, they are engaging in a critique of extreme right-wing politics, but unlike the overtly political aims of agitprop they are not seeking to disseminate a particular ideological counter-message or preparing the way for an alternative political future. Nor are they, as agitprop was, an attempt to take theatre to the people: the plays were performed in conventional theatre settings to the middle class audiences that frequent such venues.[36] Thus they raise questions about the relationship between theatre and politics but leave them unaddressed.

The AIDS plays of the 1980s provide a pertinent contrast to this. They were a deliberate attempt to utilise theatre for political and social ends in order to raise public and artistic awareness of a disease epidemic which was receiving few financial or medical resources, and even less media coverage. *The Normal Heart*, written by the gay activist Larry Kramer, and *As Is* by William Hoffman opened in New York in early

1985, only a month apart from each other. Both plays put homosexuality and AIDS on the stage and, although they were not the first plays to tackle such issues, they caused a stir, partly, indeed, due to Kramer's open indictment of the New York authorities and the dramatic rising count of AIDS deaths that was tracked on the set and theatre walls of *The Normal Heart*.[37] Early on both plays invoke plague to label AIDS and this was to become a repeated gesture in subsequent gay writings upon the disease.[38] Yet while Hoffman and Kramer draw parallels between AIDS and plague, and the latter goes as far as comparing AIDS victims with the Jews of the Holocaust, neither represents the disease symbolically in any systematic way: in fact they are praised precisely for not succumbing to such metaphorisation and for being 'forthright' in their treatment of AIDS by the critic Joel Shatzky in his essay 'AIDS Enters the American Theatre: *As Is* and *The Normal Heart*'.[39] This lack of symbolisation or personification of disease and the absence of any extended analogy of AIDS as plague is where these writers diverge from Camus and Čapek. It is not so much that Hoffman and Kramer's politics were more straightforward and undisguised – the political references in Camus and Čapek are overt and unlikely to be missed – but they directly presented New York audiences with issues and criticisms in a confrontational and urgent manner which, instead of abstracting the disease, brought it closer to the audience by showing the very real effect it was having upon the local gay community.

In 'Defoe's *Journal of the Plague Year*: A Model for Stories of Plague', Laurel Brodsley examines Defoe's plague narrative and the beneficial legacy it bequeathed to AIDS literature, arguing that such a model supports the assertion that '[e]ducational materials, on their own, have very little effect; individual members of an audience must be touched and moved by personal experiences revealed through the vicarious power of art' (12). Following the vicissitudes of a central gay relationship, along with their various friends and fellow campaigners, Kramer and Hoffman provided such personalised accounts of the effects of AIDS. It is perhaps this that provoked what Shatzky called 'an electrifying effect upon their audiences' (134), coupled with the head-on confrontation of the problems raised by the emergent epidemic. Three models are thus available for staging the relationship in theatre between plague and politics: firstly, there is that employed by Camus and Čapek, where plague becomes the representative figuration of a repressive political regime. This is a conjunction that had existed in Elizabethan tracts, which themselves were often drawing upon Biblical representations. Secondly, there are the AIDS plays in which plague is used among other examples

to help bring a new and medically confounding and deadly disease to the attention of an audience for a specific political change in public opinion and state funding. In some respects, the AIDS plays have their corollary in Elizabethan plays tackling syphilis, such as Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* and *Pericles*. Like their Elizabethan predecessors, AIDS plays may draw upon plague but they gain their real force and impact from the crossover the disease provides with sexuality and issues of behaviour and public health. Lastly, there is the theory proposed by Artaud, which utilises plague as a way of envisioning a unique and revelatory theatrical experience that turns the spectator into a participant and seeks to challenge theatrical conventions as well as provoke politically and socially transformative effects in audience members. Artaud's conception is by far the most radically challenging: aesthetically, theatrically and potentially politically it goes much further than the other models which have an issue-based protest to communicate and which do so, despite varying levels of dramatic innovation, still broadly within the conventions of mainstream theatrical acceptability.

Artaud was claiming much for the power of the theatre and has not been without his critics. As Constance Spreen has outlined, the reception of Artaud's work by the French theatrical and literary community, particularly but not exclusively, on the right, was contemptuous. To those who were concerned to strengthen and reiterate a sense of a specifically French classical literary heritage, such as the nationalist Charles Maurras and his followers, Artaud's proposed jettisoning of masterpieces and textual authority represented a scandal and a betrayal. Spreen summarises:

> In attempting to give vent to feelings buried in the psyche and in refusing to pay homage to literature, Artaudian theater performed a primitivizing function antithetical to the civilizing role that the Maurrasians envisioned. … For him [Maurras], civilization's survival relied on the textual reification of ideas and values, which permitted their continued transmission. … In doing away with the written word, Artaudian theater threatened to dismantle the wall preventing the fall of civilization into barbarism.
>
> (88)

Such conservatism and elitism within the literary establishment was precisely what Artaud was fighting against; the psychic release they feared was exactly what he advocated. A more disturbing criticism which can be levelled at Artaud, however, is that the return to a more mythical, spiritual or primitive aesthetics is reactionary. In Geoffrey Baker's

phrase, this 'progressive regression' could be interpreted in a way that had parallels with the fascist nostalgia for past forms and their deliberate manipulation of the mass fascination of spectacle (19). Unlike Nietzsche, in whose work *The Birth of Tragedy* Baker identifies a similar desire to interrupt theatrical tradition, Artaud escaped the heaviest of these accusations due to the late popular reception and impact of his work (19).

Artaud's theory has subsequently had a great impact upon the avant-garde despite The Theatre of Cruelty only and with much difficulty staging one play, an adaptation of Shelley's *The Cenci*.[40] In fact, as Jacques Derrida suggests in 'The Theatre of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation', such a theatre can perhaps never truly exist, or only though a certain infidelity to itself. Derrida points to an inevitable contradiction in Artaud's thought: on the one hand he '*wanted to erase repetition in general*' which included Western theatre's reliance upon a text and upon speech as the reproduction of that text; he proposed instead an affirmation of the gesture, of the presence of the theatre, as unrepeatable.[41] Yet at the same time, Derrida argues, theatre cannot escape the representation which is inscribed at the heart of presence itself:

> Artaud kept himself as close as possible to the limit: the possibility and impossibility of pure theater. Presence, in order to be presence and self-presence, has always already begun to represent itself, has always already been penetrated. Affirmation itself must be penetrated in repeating itself.
>
> (249)

Insofar as this indicates that the assault Artaud launched upon Western mimetic theatre was tautologous (no pure nonrepeatable theatre without pure presence; no presence without repetition) then in its contribution to aesthetic theory, its attempt at a 'theatrological' intervention, Artaud's thought is caught within what Derrida calls a 'circular limit' (250). This notwithstanding however, there is a further point about the theatrical use of plague which relates to Artaud's desire to divest the theatre of what he terms 'the dictatorship of speech' (40). Conventional theatre's reliance upon the text of its production, its ultimate resignation to authorial intent and direction, its happiness to speak or repeat another's words, bars it from asking, as Artaud does, 'whether this social and moral system might not be by chance iniquitous' (41–2). In other words, it partakes of or acquiesces to the tyranny which it cannot hope to depose, a tyranny which prohibits the audience from responding or feeling in a truly transformative way, a tyranny which is based upon,

however many directorial decisions may be made, a fundamental deferral to the way in which a playwright, such as Camus or Čapek, decides to portray dictatorships or plague. This intimates that there is a limit to the effect these performances can exert upon their audience.

Camus and Čapek did achieve representations which grafted together plague and fascism. But it is upon this issue of the 'representation' of plague that they are most divided from Artaud. The actual conditions of life under dictatorships or during plague cannot be given a true representation on the stage precisely because of the unreality of the theatre. If representing plague is re-presenting it, putting it before the spectator reproduced from the authorially dictated text to which it is tied, and, at the same time re-presenting dictatorial rule, then the theatre is only 'telling stories', in Artaud's words. Where those stories are unknown or have been, until their staging, wilfully ignored, as was the case with the AIDS plays, then they may have the power to impact political and social beliefs and behaviour. But there is nothing new to be learnt about either plague or the effect of dictatorships from *State of Siege* or *The White Plague*, and neither provide a revelatory experience of the self or society as Artaud saw plague and theatre doing. If plague can be conceived, and this is perhaps what is radical about Artaud, as an invitation to a collective revelation, an 'orgiastic moment', if theatre can do this too, it is not through the simple representation of plague upon the stage. Theatre and plague operate simultaneously as poison and cure, like the *pharmakon* which Derrida writes of and which will be discussed shortly in the following chapter.[42] Here is the logic of the *pharmakon* at work in Artaud: 'It appears that by means of the plague, a gigantic abscess, as much moral as social, has been collectively drained; and that like plague, the theatre has been created to drain abscesses collectively' (31). Camus and Čapek go so far as to identify an abscess, social and moral, at the heart of the complacent acceptance of fascism, but they do not go further than this by offering an antidote, a draining. Artaud's plague is an action, a force and a beneficial alteration, although it is not without its risks. For Camus and Čapek, on the other hand, it is merely a vehicle through which to condemn fascism, to label it as sick, destructive, divisive and inhuman. This returns us to Ricoeur's definition of metaphor as a coupling which constitutes 'a semantic innovation'. The conjunction of plague and dictatorships has an established history, but Ricoeur's definition accords with what Artaud has done: in attempting to outline a revitalisation of theatre through plague he has opened fresh insights into ways in which plague itself can be creatively reconceptualised and put to use in a twentieth-century context.

3

Oedipus the *Pharmakos* and the Psychoanalytic Plague

During the plague outbreak of 1530 in Geneva, a man named Jean Placet was accused of deliberately spreading the disease. It was claimed that he used the dressings of suppurating buboes to create a powder which could be administered deceptively under the guise of a palliative or spread upon handkerchiefs, door handles and even the walls of streets. Placet and his supposed fellow conspirator, a pest-house priest, confessed to the charges under torture. In punishment, their hands were cut off in front of the dwellings of their alleged victims, their flesh was lacerated with red-hot pincers and then one was beheaded and the other hanged. The unfortunate Genevan had been a practising, if unqualified, surgeon in charge of a pest-house. So, from one point of view, he had certainly had access to contaminated clothing and dressings but, in another respect, as the in-house medic he was the man who provided plague relief: he administered the lancing practices, protective draughts and healing poultices that should have placed him above suspicion.[1] Historically, it is probable that doctors sometimes inadvertently carried plague fleas from one victim to another, although if this were the case the medical man would have been just as likely to succumb as any of his patients. However, such knowledge is retrospective: in 1530, no doubt a doctor would be summoned upon the first sign of plague, if one could be afforded. What is intriguing, then, about the fate of Jean Placet is how a man whose role is supposed to be curative comes to be perceived and feared as a practitioner of the very opposite art, poisoning. This convergence of oppositions thrown up by Geneva's gruesome plague tale is not a singular instance; it ushers in an examination of the scapegoat, which will lead back to ancient Greek plague rituals and to Oedipus, whose legacy includes a major role in psychoanalytic thinking.

The relationship of plague with discourses of blame and acts of scapegoating has a long history and persists in the twentieth century, notable within anti-Semitism and the anti-fascist rhetoric surrounding the period of the Second World War, and resurfacing again during the initial AIDS outbreak in the 1980s, as Chapter 2 discusses in the context of theatre. Twentieth-century critics and theorists have sought to rethink the position of what or who is liminal, marginal and excluded. This has included turning to the measures used in times of crisis to exclude or disenfranchise a particular group of society in order to investigate the mechanisms that transform such groups into scapegoats. Rituals surrounding the act of scapegoating were present in ancient societies and some had the specific role of averting the crisis of plague. One such was the *pharmakos* ritual of ancient Greece which involved the death of a person chosen to carry the pollution of plague outside the walls of the polis. Tracking its contemporary significance, this chapter draws upon recent thinkers who discuss the *pharmakos*, such as the philosopher Jacques Derrida during an exploration of Socrates' belittling of writing next to speech; the American literary critic Northrop Frye, who sees a parallel between literary characters excluded from their societies and the Greek *pharmakos*; and theorist René Girard who argues that the scapegoat is a central figure in Western discourse. With its sobriquet 'the century of genocide', it is perhaps unsurprising that the twentieth century saw thinkers and writers take a new interest in the figures of the *pharmakos* and the scapegoat. In the *pharmakos* rituals of ancient Greece, the individual body is used to stand in for a whole plague-stricken community or city; similarly, Chapter 2 saw how the plagued body was used by playwrights as a metaphor for the sick state. Attempting to re-establish the boundaries that define and separate sickness and health is what underpins the ritual of the *pharmakos*; its move into a metaphorical figuration does not dispel this need. One of the most powerful discourses to address and question the boundaries between health and illness in the twentieth century has been psychoanalysis. Yet the presence of the *pharmakos* legacy within psychoanalytic thinking has remained unacknowledged and unexplored. Leading straight from Sophocles' plague play to Freud's Oedipus complex and on into the reception of psychoanalysis in the later twentieth-century, the legacies of plague and the *pharmakos* signal a troubling of thresholds and a collapsing of oppositions just as they did in ancient Greece. Once again, blurred or contested distinctions between health/sickness, carrier of disease/cure for disease, and the slippage between a metaphoric and a literal thinking of the body are at work.

It would probably have been of no comfort for Placet to learn he was far from alone when it came to the suspicion, not uncommon in the midst of plague outbreaks, that doctors might also be poisoners. During the slightly later Black Death, the massacre of the European Jews that took place amid accusations of well poisoning was directly linked, according to some accounts, to the fact that medicine in Southern Europe was chiefly practised by Jewish physicians.[2] In one of the first of many similar trials to follow, a Jewish physician in Chillon implicated, under torture, a whole Jewish community in the poisoning of a town's well, for which the unlucky medic was condemned to the rack.[3] Throughout plague outbreaks, fear of the crossover between two ordinarily opposed functions, healing and poisoning, was not peculiar to the Middle Ages but, indeed, ancient. For example, the Greek god Apollo fulfilled a dual role: although often depicted with a bow and arrow as the bringer of plague, he was also the god to whom the people pleaded for respite when pestilence struck.[4] So effective against plague was Apollo considered to be that his statue was shipped from Greece and imported into Rome in 430 BC, when the Italian city was suffering particularly cruelly under the disease.[5] It is not only Greek gods, however, who fulfil this two-fold function: in the Christian religion, banners carried in Italian processions during the Black Death frequently depicted either Christ, the Madonna or angels shooting arrows of pestilence but also, and sometimes simultaneously, protecting a city from the same (see Figure 3.1).[6]

That a god could punish his people with plague but then relieve them from it was thus an ancient belief and proved to have longevity: even in 1722 Defoe's *A Journal of the Plague Year* has, alongside considerations of other causes, the fictional H. F. declare on the one hand that 'doubtless the Visitation it self is a Stroke from Heaven upon a City, or Country, or Nation where it falls' and, on the other, that the abatement of the disease was achieved by '[n]othing but the immediate Finger of God, nothing but omnipotent Power'.[7] Yet the case of the poisoner-physician is a slightly different one from the doubled role of bringer-protector God: the death of Placet and the exterminations of the Black Death Jewish communities in Europe take on the appearance of scapegoating. Raymond Crawfurd's *Plague and Pestilence in Art and Literature* (1914), which recounts the tale of Placet, is perhaps the first comparative study of figurations of plague in paintings and in mythological and biblical narratives. Crawfurd saw scapegoating at work in Placet's trial and torture, concluding that in Geneva a 'rapid decline of the plague ensued on so acceptable a sacrifice' (156). The poisoning physician did indeed

Figure 3.1 Benedetto Bonfigli (c. 1420–1496), *Madonna della Misericordia* (Madonna of Mercy). Perugia, San Francesco (Oddi Chapel) © 1990, Photo Scala, Florence. Angels shoot arrows of plague while the Madonna protects the town with her cloak.

provide the cure for plague, not through medicine but through death: Genevan society, lacking the rituals which in ancient times prescribed sacrifices to purify a city of plague, had spontaneously improvised a substitute.

The *Pharmakos* ritual

In his mammoth and groundbreaking study *The Golden Bough* (1890), James Frazer dedicated a whole volume to the topic of the scapegoat, including a section upon human sacrifice where he records the practice of the Greek colony in Marseilles during plague. A man 'of the poorer classes' used to offer himself as a scapegoat for the city, which in return supported him for a year upon the best quality food.[8] At the end of this period, dressed in sacred garments, he was 'led through the whole city, while prayers were uttered that all the evils of the people might fall upon his head' (253). He was then cast out of the city or stoned to death by the people outside the walls. Corresponding practices were apparent throughout Greece and her colonies, particularly as a response to plague outbreaks and other natural calamities. In a similar way, Athens purified the city once a year by leading out two *pharmakoi*, one for the men, another for the women, who were meant to embody the polluting pestilence their expulsion was undertaken to arrest.[9] The *pharmakos* supposedly carried plague out of the city, transferring the disease from the general populace to be concentrated in one body: their exclusion or death was supposed to be curative. The ritual fudges the symbolic and the literal: the healthy body of the *pharmakos* is symbolically and metaphorically polluted with disease, they 'embody' plague, but their death, also symbolic of the death of plague, is literal. This shifting from the literal to metaphoric and back again shows that plague marks a time when the distinctions between healthy/infected, symbolic/literal, community/individual are threatened. Such polarities usually establish and maintain order. Sacrificing an individual for the community, a healthy person for a sick city, enacting a literal death for the intended cessation of plague, the *pharmakos* ritual does not separate out blurred distinctions but embraces and incorporates them. The *pharmakos* is both carrier of plague and cure; at the same time and in the same ritual, he or she is the poison to be removed and its antidote. It is therefore less surprising that the same contradictory function can be seen in the treatment of Jean Placet in Geneva many years later and in the suspicions aroused against the Jews during the Black Death.[10]

The Greek word for scapegoat, *pharmakos*, can also be used to refer to a wizard, a magician or, significantly, a poisoner. It takes these overlaid meanings from the semantically complex and related word *pharmakon*, meaning 'drug'. In 'Plato's Pharmacy', Jacques Derrida has written at length upon Plato's negative use of *pharmakon* to refer to books, and by extension writing, in comparison to the benefits of *logos*, the living speech of Greek discourse. For Derrida it is essential that *pharmakon* be understood in both senses, available in English as in Greek: drug as poison, but also drug as medicine. He writes:

> If the *pharmakon* is 'ambivalent,' it is because it constitutes the medium in which opposites are opposed, the movement and the play that links them among themselves, reverses them or makes one side cross over into the other (soul/body, good/evil, inside/outside, memory/forgetfulness, speech/writing, etc.).[11]

Plato's argument is undermined by the word with which he chooses to belittle the written. By dismissing writing as *pharmakon* he opens himself to just such a reading as Derrida proposes, not because the word he has chosen is semantically unstable, which could of course be a general charge levelled at any number of words, but because it breaks the boundaries between two seemingly discrete areas: it is not merely that medicine and poison are '*coincidentia oppositorum*', but that *pharmakon* 'refers back to a *same* that is not the identical, to the common element or medium of any possible dissociation' (130). The *pharmakon* uncovers and frustrates the desire to dissociate one thing from another, to mark difference and to classify by putting, for example, medicine into one bottle and poison into another. The close relation of *pharmakon*, the poison-medicine, to *pharmakos*, the plague pollution and cure, is also not lost upon Derrida who, in referring to the practice of the ancient Greeks, describes very similarly the functions of the two terms:

> The origin of difference and division, the *pharmakos* represents evil both introjected and projected. Beneficial insofar as he cures – and for that, venerated and cared for – harmful insofar as he incarnates the powers of evil – and for that, feared and treated with caution. Alarming and calming. Sacred and accursed. The conjunction, *coincidentia oppositorum*, ceaselessly undoes itself in the passage to decision or crisis.
>
> (134)

The *pharmakos*, like the *pharmakon*, muddies the very distinctions which it is intended to enforce: the scapegoat which the city casts beyond its walls is supposed to secure the city by placing outside what is actually a part of the inside and its very constitution – the *pharmakos*, after all, is chosen from among the people. At the same time, plague and evil are also, even today, seen to come from without, poisoning the inside from outside the walls or boundaries of a country, nation or town.[12] The stability of inside/outside distinctions and those which follow on from them, such as health/sickness and physician/poisoner, are shaken and questionable in the light of the *pharmakos*.

Oedipus, *Pharmakos*

In Greek rituals and Black Death purges, such is the *pharmakos*: the disrupter of boundaries, situated at the point of crisis, the symbolic plague carrier intended as a literal cure. Northrop Frye, in his study of the interrelations of myth and narrative, lists literary examples of the *pharmakos* figure, which he sees translated into the scenes of 'domestic tragedy' in 'Hawthorne's Hester Prynne, in Melville's Billy Budd, in Hardy's Tess, in the Septimus of *Mrs Dalloway*, in stories of persecuted Jews and Negroes'.[13] Before all these, however, stands Sophocles' Oedipus, who constitutes the most prominent literary example: he is the *pharmakos* in relation to the plague-ridden Thebes of *Oedipus the King*, a text with a continuing legacy of influence upon literary and psychoanalytic thought. Judging from the dates of actual plague outbreaks in Athens and the dates generally thought to mark the play's performance, the two events were almost, if not exactly, contemporaneous, making the plague of Thebes a detail of far more consequence than it is seen to be by modern readers, and an apposite addition, of Sophocles' own invention, to the already well-known Oedipus myth.[14] The play opens with a priest beseeching the king of Thebes on behalf of the people to act to avert the 'raging plague' (*loimos echthistos*) which is relentlessly destroying the citizens.[15] Oedipus has already dispatched Creon, his brother-in-law, to consult Apollo's oracle at Delphi and is awaiting the answer. Upon his return, Creon announces Apollo's instructions: 'Drive the corruption (*miasma*) from the land, / don't harbour it any longer, past all cure, / don't nurse it in your soil – root it out!' (109–11). In a way familiar from Chapter 2, the physical body becomes the locus where the state's metaphorical disease is inscribed and suffered: corruption (*miasma*) in the polis is causing plague (*loimos*) in the bodies of the citizens, as well as a blight upon their crops, and the corrupting

act from which the disease stems is the unavenged murder of the previous King of Thebes, Laius. The murderer is to be found and treated in the same way as a *pharmakos* in order to relieve the city from plague; Apollo instructs: 'Banish the man, or pay back blood with blood' (114). Oedipus is tragically found to be the cause of the Theban plague. In consequence, he is required to fulfil the role of the *pharmakos*, the cure, making the words of the initial priest ring with portentous double meaning when he reassures the people that the King has promised to find the murderer and arrest the plague: 'The kindness we came for / Oedipus volunteers himself' (165–7).

In the scene that follows this opening action, the Chorus, unaware of Creon's return, cry out to Apollo, the god to whom it is proper to turn in plague-times. Their lamentation refers to Apollo as both 'Archer' (185) and 'Healer' (173), the recognisable conjunction of roles as bringer of plague and curing physician. It is clear from their words that the Chorus expect a *pharmakos* to be demanded by the god, such as the one ritually sacrificed in the Greek Thargelia spring festival: 'what now is your price? / some new sacrifice? Some ancient rite from the past / come round again each spring?' (174–5).[16] In addressing the Chorus with the news from Apollo, Oedipus makes clear the causality between the corruptor of Thebes who murdered Lauis and plague: 'banish this man – / whoever he may be … *He* is the plague (*miasmatos)*, the heart of our corruption, / as Apollo's oracle has just revealed to me' (270–1 and 276–7). Sickness that is moral, the murderous crime, contagiously spreads physical plague sickness throughout the whole city in this structure where the metaphoric and the literal infectiously bleed into one another. The *pharmakos* ritual is not referred to by name in *Oedipus the King*, yet its structure and the relief it is supposed to bring to a plague-stricken city must have been clearly implied for the Athenian spectators, who themselves had so recently been fighting the disease. Sophocles' addition of plague to the already well-known Oedipus myth draws attention to the disease, as well as to its link with the Archer-Healer god Apollo and the *pharmakos* ritual.[17]

The dramatic reversal from triumphant king into pathetic *pharmakos* is, observes Jean-Pierre Vernant in his essay on *Oedipus the King*, 'the keystone of the tragic architecture, the model which serves as matrix to its tragic organization and to its language'.[18] Vernant explicitly makes the connection between the Greek plague rites of the *pharmakos*, a number of which he recounts, and the role of Oedipus. He then comments:

> Venerated as the equal of a god, uncontested master of justice, holding in his hands the health of the whole city – such, placed above

> other men, is the character of Oedipus the Wise, who at the end of the play is reversed, projected into an opposite figure: at the last rung of disgrace appears Oedipus-Swollen Foot, abominable contamination, concentrating in himself all the impurity of the world. The divine king, purifier and saviour of his people, rejoins the contaminated criminal whom it is necessary to expel like a *pharmakos*, a scapegoat, so that the city, pure again, can be saved.
>
> (484)

In Vernant's opinion, Oedipus is a paradigmatic figure within this definition of tragedy since he travels from the highest of heights, being kingly, intelligent and treated by his people almost as though he were a god, down to the lowest of lows as the *pharmakos*, blinded, dethroned and with exile ahead (484). Vernant points out that in the same way Aristotle defined a riddle as that which joins together two irreconcilable terms, *Oedipus the King* is constructed as a riddle for Oedipus to solve, with the two incompatible positions of king, saviour of Thebes, and *pharmakos*, scourge of Thebes (477). Vernant's interpretation of Oedipus therefore synchronises with the oppositional definitions of the *pharmakos* outlined by Derrida, who proposes in a footnote, without elaborating, that there is also 'a clear necessity of bringing together the figures of Oedipus and the *pharmakos*' (179, fn 56). Where once Oedipus answered the Sphinx with a definition of himself (man), he again finds that he provides the answer to the riddle of Laius' murder and the resultant plague of Thebes.

Vernant is not the only one to see the scapegoating mechanism as a central theme in *Oedipus the King*: the theorist René Girard, for whose work the scapegoat is an essential figure, quite clearly locates such a sacrifice at the heart of Sophocles' play. In 'The Plague in Literature and Myth' Girard describes a thematic cluster of four elements that he claims are always present in plague literature: epidemic contamination, the dissolving of differences, mimetic doubles and the sacrificial.[19] In *Oedipus the King*, Girard establishes, these elements are shown in the plague of Thebes and in how Oedipus' actions unwittingly dissolve the kinship differences between wife and mother, children and siblings, father and adversary. Mimetic doubling is located in the rivalries over authority and legitimacy between Creon, Oedipus and Tiresias, and finally the scapegoat position is filled, as for Vernant, by Oedipus himself.[20] However, in his later work, *The Scapegoat*, Girard criticises Vernant for his use of the word *pharmakos*. The problem here rests upon a question of degree: for Girard the scapegoat is not just a 'theme' or a 'motif',

it is a structure fundamental to myth and fundamental to the reaction of society to a phenomenon like plague that threatens to obliterate the differences upon which a society organises itself, such as youth and maturity, rich and poor, deserving and undeserving (25). Hence, for Girard, the myth of Oedipus is a perfect example of what he terms a 'persecution text' wherein an individual victim becomes the scapegoat for a societal crisis, in this case, plague (27).

Debates about the role of Oedipus in the play often involve considerations of his guilt or innocence and it is such a disagreement that causes Girard to accuse Vernant of eschewing the term 'scapegoat' and preferring '*pharmakos*' only 'to avoid being criticized for ethnocentrism by his colleagues' (121–2). Girard's argument with *pharmakos* suffers from confusion, apparent in his claim that, '[w]hat no one ever recognizes is that Oedipus could not be both incestuous son and parricide and at the same time *pharmakos*. When we speak of *pharmakos* we mean an innocent victim in the contaminated Judaic and Christian sense' (122). The second of these statements makes a conflation between Greek ritual and Judaic ritual which obliterates the importance of plague. Furthermore, the two sacrifices, while similar in that they are both purificatory, are distinct: the Judaic ritual is a response to sin; the Greek ritual to a city crisis such as plague. The Judaic scapegoat, as outlined in Leviticus, is a goat which is not killed; instead it is sent out into the wilderness in atonement, carrying all the sins of the sons of Israel. Another, different, goat represents the sin offering to God and is sacrificed.[21] In contrast, the Greek ritual is not concerned with guilt or innocence, sin or its atonement; it is concerned with contagion, pollution and disease. The *pharmakos* symbolically carries plague outside the city and this expulsion marks the equally symbolic catharsis of the polluted population, but the *pharmakos* is not culpable for the arrival of disease. Girard's conclusion that '[e]ither Oedipus is a scapegoat and not guilty of parricide and incest or he is guilty and is not, at least for the Greeks, the innocent scapegoat that Jean-Pierre Vernant modestly calls *pharmakos*' fails to recognise these differences (123). His insistence on the scapegoat's innocence dislodges the importance of the pollution the *pharmakos* carries out of the city. Girard maintains that '*Oedipus is a scapegoat*', but then concedes that the 'distance is not great between this expression and Jean-Pierre Vernant's *pharmakos*, but strong prejudices prevent many from crossing it' (123). The difference, in the end, appears to revolve around the distinctive disparity between two cultural traditions; significantly, Girard's discussion does not refute, or even mention, the clear usage that Vernant establishes for the *pharmakos* as a response to plague.

If one is determined to distinguish between *pharmakos* and scapegoat, which Girard seems to desire even though he is not entirely capable of excavating the one from the realm of the other, the events, the dialogue and particularly the plague of *Oedipus the King* strongly support a retention of the Greek term over the more Judeo-Christian.

In *Oedipus the King*, Oedipus is simultaneously innocent and guilty: it is not that these two amount to the same thing but that they refer to 'the same that is not the identical' which Derrida highlights in relation to the structure of the *pharmakon* and which is equally present in the *pharmakos*. Such a reading is supported by Frye's observation in *Anatomy of Criticism*. Although beginning with what appears to be the opposite argument, he gives an explanation which establishes its concurrence:

> The *pharmakos* is neither innocent nor guilty. He is innocent in the sense that what happens to him is far greater than anything he has done provokes, like the mountaineer whose shout brings down an avalanche. He is guilty in the sense that he is a member of a guilty society, or living in a world where such injustices are an inescapable part of existence. The two facts do not come together; they remain ironically apart.
>
> (41–2)

Oedipus' patricide and incest are committed in innocence but, crucially, just as the mountaineer's shout causes an avalanche to bury a village and its inhabitants, these acts have brought plague to decimate Thebes. It is because of Oedipus there is plague; his exclusion from the polis Apollo promises as cure: what is decisive here is not the attribution of guilt or innocence per se – the question of the ethical responsibility for a crime unwittingly and unknowingly committed is one the play self-consciously raises – but that Oedipus accepts the polluted and excluded fate which the structure of the *pharmakos* ritual demands he fulfil.

Notwithstanding the disagreement with Vernant over terminology, Girard's acknowledgement of the important centrality of plague in *Oedipus the King*, which is also the basis for his assertion that the disease is still a 'literary theme' of 'incredible vitality' today, is a crucial step in realigning readings of Sophocles' play.[22] The substantial contribution both critics make is to shift emphasis away from Oedipus' acts of incest and parricide by highlighting the actual and symbolic role of Oedipus and plague in the play. Oedipus' 'crimes' are still paradigmatic by virtue of being among the most boundary-breaking within the Western concept of what is impermissible and it is this that accounts for the severity

of the *miasma*, the corruption, which causes the *loimos*, the plague which attacks Thebes. The advantage gained by recognising Oedipus as a *pharmakos* figure is to give new emphasis to the way the play complicates notions of sickness and health, the symbolic and the literal, the contagion and the cure. This legacy stretches into the twentieth-century and has an important bearing upon later uses of Oedipus, particularly those of Freud, father of a new 'cure' for hysteria and neuroses.

Freud's Oedipus and the psychoanalytic plague

Freud plucked Oedipus from the past of classical tragedy and inserted him into twentieth-century discourses of desires and psychic constitutions. Psychoanalysis concentrates on understanding Oedipus' crimes in relation to our psychical organisation and motivations, a focus which presents itself as seemingly inassimilable to my considerations of Oedipus as *pharmakos*. In all his writings which touch upon Oedipus and the Greek drama, Freud does not consider the importance of plague and, more often than not, does not even mention it.[23] Nevertheless, the ambivalence at the heart of the *pharmakos* structure is brought to bear upon psychoanalysis itself in the celebrated quip of one of Freud's contemporaries, the satirical Viennese writer Karl Kraus. Kraus wrote: 'Before Freud, doctors cautioned that the cure may be worse than the disease; now they ought to caution that the cure is the disease – namely, psychoanalysis.'[24] With the analyst implicitly placed as poisoner-healer, the psychoanalysis of Kraus's perception is a contagious disease, a plague. Even taking account of all that psychoanalysis has to say about the revelatory role of humour, Kraus's remark could perhaps be dismissed as an outsider's uninformed scepticism had it not curiously concurred with a comment Freud himself is reported to have made about the science he had fathered. This is recounted by Lacan in his paper 'The Freudian Thing', delivered in Vienna, 1955, which affirms Freud's legacy and revolves specifically around the question of what should and should not be considered constitutive of the psychoanalytic cure:

> Thus Freud's words to Jung – I have it from Jung's own mouth – when, on an invitation from Clark University, they arrived in New York harbour [1909] and caught their first glimpse of the famous statue illuminating the universe, 'They don't realize we're bringing them the plague', are attributed to him as confirmation of a hubris whose antiphrasis and gloom do not extinguish their troubled

> brightness. To catch their author in its trap, Nemesis had only to take him at his word. We would be justified in fearing that Nemesis had added a first-class return ticket.[25]

Regretfully, Lacan tells us nothing about the conversation which had precipitated such a memory from Jung.[26] Despite this, the comments are revealing: Lacan certainly believes that a particular type of psychoanalysis has spread like plague, spread in a new form first in the US, only to return to Europe and begin to contaminate psychoanalytic practice there. Yet 'troubled brightness' implies that the idea of psychoanalysis as plague is not a wholly gloomy picture; in fact, the problem is not the psychoanalytic plague itself, but the direction that plague has taken. Lacan's paper is an attack upon the North American appropriation and practice of psychoanalysis; specifically, it assays and upbraids the emphasis, in US practice, upon the ego. In 'The Freudian Thing', North American psychoanalysts are criticised for endeavouring to deliver 'happiness' and 'success' (141). This relies, Lacan accuses them, upon a mistaken concept of 'cure' which posits the aim of analysis to be 'identification with the analyst's ego' (149).[27] Psychoanalysis is diseased; Lacan is there in Vienna to cure, to contain, to expel from the psychoanalytic polis the straying practices of those 'wild' psychoanalysts who have not, he believes, understood Freud correctly.[28] Interestingly, both Freud and Lacan position themselves as capable of controlling the psychoanalytic plague. Freud's comment implies that one can 'bring' plague, but plague, by its nature, comes of its own accord and cannot be carried without contagion. Lacan too, in Freud's name, is concerned to circumscribe the spread of psychoanalytic plague mutations.

Beyond the obvious utility of Freud's remark about plague for Lacan's argument, there lies the suggestion, passed on from Freud to Jung to Lacan, of psychoanalysis as a contagious disease, a plague capable of proliferation.[29] In fact, when it made its first appearance, psychoanalysis was not caught up very infectiously in its early days in Vienna; rather, it attracted medical and scientific criticism and suspicion.[30] Notwithstanding its lack of mainstream approbation in Austria, as early as 1907 it was exciting interest further away, particularly in Zurich. In his biography of Freud, Ernest Jones notes how Freud, on the 1909 journey to spread the psychoanalytic plague to America, 'had found his cabin boy reading *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, an incident that gave him the first idea that he might be famous'.[31] Psychoanalysis was on the move. In a retrospective account of the events around this time,

On the History of the Psychoanalytic Movement (1914), Freud had recourse to another metaphor which encourages the analogy between plague and psychoanalysis:

> Representatives of all the most important nations congregate in Switzerland, where intellectual activity is so lively; a focus of infection there was bound to be of great importance for the spread of the 'psychical epidemic', as Hoche of Freiburg has called it.[32]

As James Strachey's invaluable editorship clarifies, Alfred Hoche was one of the self-confessed adversaries of psychoanalysis, having delivered a paper in 1910 entitled 'A Psychical Epidemic among Doctors' [*Eine psychische Epidemie unter Ärzten*], denouncing the new science to fellow delegates at a medical conference. Jung writes to Freud rather gleefully about Hoche's paper: 'I am eager to hear this historic outpouring for myself. How delightful to be publicly sneered at as insane! I scarcely think the epidemic is raging anywhere except among us.'[33] More confidently and carefully, Freud replies: '[the Hoche paper] is the greatest recognition I have received up to now. Here it is certified in writing that we are 15 years in advance of our opponents.'[34] That a member of the medical establishment had seen fit to refer to psychoanalysis as an epidemic suggests that just as plague had been an experience in the past outside the understanding of physicians and their treatment, the new work of Freud and his associates was equally beyond the skills and comprehension of early twentieth-century medicine. Thus what was intended as a slur in fact reveals the inadequacy of the medical establishment in the face of the neuroses and hysteria that psychoanalysis was treating. Usually prized for its nonliterariness, for its factual description of symptoms and cures, in this instance medical language uses disease and infection metaphorically to disparage and taint what it considers to be the impure and unscientific psychoanalytic discourse. Freud's reversal of Hoche's derogatory disease metaphor transforms it into an assertion of the power of psychoanalysis to spread infectiously throughout Europe. Indeed, although Zurich was perhaps the most important centre for psychoanalysis at that time, Freud quotes Havelock Ellis, who claims that by 1911 psychoanalysis was being practised as far afield as the US, England, India and Canada. It was only two years earlier that Freud had journeyed with Jung to Clark University in the US, making, as he arrived, the comment about plague recounted by Lacan.

Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* and the ancient Greek plague rituals suggest that where there is plague, there is a *pharmakos* to be found.

If we follow Freud, as Lacan so determinedly desires us to do, then the psychoanalytic plague has, of course, its very own Oedipus who gives his name to one of the most central of psychoanalytic phenomena. Rather like the contagion that he causes in Thebes, Oedipus spreads infectiously throughout Freud's oeuvre. Just as epidemiology searches for the origins of plague to follow its spread, this chapter journeys through psychoanalysis and follows Oedipus, his arrival and the growth of his significance, highlighting upon the way the contagion that becomes attached to him and that he carries. It will become evident that his presence still marks a crisis which calls for differentiation, as plague outbreaks do; that taboos exist to contain the contagion of desires; and, finally, that excluding in order to 'cure', where once it was a ritual in response to actual disease, has been transferred to become an aspect of the debates over sickness which seek to keep a cure itself – or the theory of a cure – 'pure'.

As early as *Studies on Hysteria* (1893–5) there are indications that our infant familial relations are important considerations in hysteria and neurosis, but as soon as the Oedipus complex makes its debut it swiftly spreads outside of the psycho-sexual development of children and into new areas. Freud's first reference to the Sophoclean tragedy occurred in a posthumously published letter addressed to Wilhelm Fliess on 15th October, 1897. At the time, he was subjecting himself to self-analysis and recording his findings in their regular correspondence. Freud revealed to his confidant that a 'single idea of general value' had dawned upon him: he had discovered the phenomenon of 'being in love with my mother and jealous of my father, and now I consider it a universal event in early childhood'.[35] Little knowing how notorious this part of his theory would become, Freud continues:

> If this is so, we can understand the gripping power of *Oedipus Rex* … the Greek legend seizes upon a compulsion that everyone recognises because he senses its existence within himself. Everyone in the audience was once a budding Oedipus in fantasy and each recoils in horror from the dream fulfilment here transplanted into reality, with the full quantity of repression which separates his infantile state from his present one.[36]

Rejecting the prevalent interpretation of the play as a contrast between destiny and human will, Freud produced a several page expansion of this germ of a thought in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, first published in 1900. There he once again asserts that the long-lasting popularity of

the play lies in witnessing the fulfilment of 'those primaeval wishes of our childhood', the acts of parricide and incest unwittingly committed by the ill-fated Oedipus.[37] These childish impulses are of course suppressed in the adult and for this reason the audience of *Oedipus the King* is as repulsed by his actions as is Oedipus himself. To this first public exposition of *Oedipus the King* Freud later affixed a remarkable footnote in 1919 which, with an undisguised dream-pun, makes a claim for his work in *Totem and Taboo*: 'Later studies have shown that the "Oedipus complex", which was touched upon for the first time in the above paragraphs in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, throws a light of undreamt-of importance on the history of the human race and the evolution of religion and morality' (365).

This undreamt-of importance is laid out in the final pages of *Totem and Taboo* (1913) where the centrality of the Oedipus complex is firmly asseverated, not only for the development of the individual but for the very foundations of human organisation and belief systems: 'At the conclusion, then, of this exceedingly condensed inquiry, I should like to insist that its outcome shows that the beginnings of religion, morals, society and art converge in the Oedipus complex'.[38] This is a staggering assertion, not short of the hubris which Lacan perceives attributed to the Freud of the plague remark, but it does summarise the ambitions of *Totem and Taboo*. Using anthropological observations from a variety of sources, Freud's investigation of totem culture pays particular attention to two of its features and these will lead back, neatly and inexorably, to Oedipus. One taboo is upon the consumption of the totem animal except for a special annual feast in which it is slaughtered and eaten; the other is a taboo upon marrying women in the clan, which prevents incest since the language of totem culture does not distinguish between family members, only between older and younger people (6–7). Like the *pharmakos*, taboo exists to enforce distinctions, to maintain purity or separate impurity, and it achieves this through a similar muddying of the literal with the metaphorical.

Like a disease, taboo is contagious: quoting from the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1910–11), Freud reports that 'the violation of a taboo makes the offender himself taboo' (20). This is a fact explained by Freud with a direct reference to disease:

> Behind all these prohibitions there seems to be something in the nature of a theory that they [taboos] are necessary because certain persons and things are charged with a dangerous power, which can be transferred through contact with them, almost like an infection

[*die sich durch Berührung mit dem so geladenen Objekt übertägt, fast wie eine Ansteckung*].

(21)[39]

Purification rituals are not performed because of the transgression, the sin, of the taboo but because of the very contagion with which the transgressor is thereby infected: Freud states, with a reference to infectiousness not quite caught up within the English translation, '[i]t is no doubt the transmissibility [*Die Übertragbarkeit*] of taboo which accounts for the attempts to throw it off by suitable purificatory ceremonies' (20/29). Demarking the tabooed person is a way of drawing boundaries between the infectious and the non-infectious, the dangerous and the safe. Taboo, this infectious and dangerous power, is attached to all special individuals, such as kings and priests; also to exceptional states like periods of menstruation or adolescence; and lastly to what Freud classes with emphasis as '*uncanny* things, such as sickness and death and what is associated with them through their power of infection or contagion' (22).[40] The possibility of physical contagion goes hand-in-hand with metaphoric contagion, which follows from breaking a prohibition. Once a taboo is broken, a punishment will follow; naturally enough it is often in the form of sickness (contagion) or death, which accords with Sophocles' insertion of plague as the punishment for the taboo of patricide. However, if the breaking of a taboo is not quickly avenged then a collective feeling of hostility arises in the clan. This for Freud is easily explainable: 'What is in question is fear of an infectious example, of the temptation to imitate – that is, of the contagious character of taboo' (71–2).[41] Taboo-breaking, in other words, is a type of 'bad' example for others and, as Jacques Derrida has suggested in a quite different context, '[a]n example always *carries* beyond itself: it thereby opens up a testamentary dimension. The example is first of all for others, and beyond the self' (34, emphasis mine).[42] The example *carries* an infectious potentiality in its public status; it is liable to be imitated. Thus taboos exist to ward off the infection of imitation and to encourage differentiating stability: in respecting its taboos a society maintains its order of (non)permissibility.[43] Taboo contains contagion, both as a constitutive element and in the sense of curtailment.

So far, then, there is a spreading group of associations, almost contagiously leaking into one another, which begin with the figure of the *pharmakos*, symbolic carrier and cure of plague in ancient Greek ritual. Sophocles' dramatic inclusion of plague in the legend of Oedipus enables his tragedy to exploit the *pharmakos* structure, positioning his hero

as both scourge and saviour of the city he rules. Without plague, which gives Oedipus' actions society-wide consequences, the play, while still recounting the tragic and unfortunate tale of a man cursed by the gods, would lack the 'dramatic reversal' of king into *pharmakos* which Vernant identifies as so important for the medium of tragedy. Furthermore, the addition of plague lifts the tragedy out of the individual sphere and into that of the polis; indeed, much of *Oedipus the King* is specifically concerned with the issues raised by the power and responsibilities of kingship. That the incest and patricide of Oedipus afflict the whole city with a highly contagious plague intimates that the crimes he has committed transmit their contagiousness; there is, as in taboo, a troubling of the boundaries between the literal and the symbolic. As becomes clear in *Totem and Taboo*, taboo-breaking has an infectious quality to it; thus, Oedipus would be an 'infectious example' and his dethronement, and the exile he begs for, the necessary punishment and, more importantly, deterrent. Taboo, like plague, is an issue of contagion, raising questions about the need for containment and the risks of imitation: thus Placet and the Jews were the *pharmakoi* not only, as in ancient Greece, because they were considered to be pollutants and were carrying plague but because the crimes which they were accused of were taboo-breaking, making them a potentially 'infectious example'. The taboo nature of the *pharmakos* has been noted by the classical archaeologist Jane Harrison, who stresses in her *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion* that the emphasis of the ritual was exclusion due to pollution rather than sacrifice to appease a god: 'The *pharmakos* is killed then, not because his death is a vicarious sacrifice, but because he is so infected and tabooed that his life is a practical impossibility'.[44] Oedipus is the *pharmakos*, infectious example, tabooed taboo-breaker, carrier and cure of plague; and it is Oedipus who Freud chooses to place at the heart of psychoanalysis.

The curative exclusion of the *pharmakos* demanded by the Greek ritual and by Apollo in *Oedipus the King* has its psychoanalytic counterpart in the detailed critiques launched against the importance Freud accords to Oedipus. These animadversions are not those of outright psychoanalytic doubters but stem from theorists who, despite their reservations about particular points, broadly affirm the significance and influence of Freud's thought. What they all share despite the nuances of their arguments is a distrust of the Oedipus complex and its ramifications. Probably the most sustained attack upon Freud's use of Oedipus is provided in *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1972) by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari who, while they wish to retain the

Freudian notion of flows of desire, are keen to expose the political and social consequences of forcing that desire into the Oedipal triad 'daddy-mommy-me'.[45] They differ from Freud quite specifically:

> We do not deny that there is an Oedipal sexuality, an Oedipal heterosexuality and homosexuality, an Oedipal castration, as well as complete objects, global images, and specific egos. We deny these are productions of the unconscious.
>
> (74)

After all, regardless of the fact that taboos on incest and patricide can be found in nearly all forms of human organisation, we have to take Freud's word for it that the desire to break these taboos exists in the unconscious: it is Freud's self-analysis of his dreams that leads him to see the resemblance between his desires and the crimes of the Sophoclean hero. For Deleuze and Guattari, Oedipal organisation may indeed be a fact true of certain families and individuals, and it may even be 'made to proliferate and be passed on', like a disease from parents to children, but this is because it reflects and helps to control societal organisation (79). Deleuze and Guattari believe desire is revolutionary; the Oedipus complex and all it implies for psychoanalysis is a way of containing this potential, blocking it into a familial triangulation which replicates itself from parent to child, or from the analyst, who is its 'carrier', to the analysand (56):

> But we should stress the fact that Oedipus creates both *the differentiations that it orders and the undifferentiated with which it threatens us*. With the same movement the Oedipus complex inserts desire into triangulation, and prohibits desire from satisfying itself within the terms of the triangulation.
>
> (78–9)

Once again the question of differentiation and boundaries comes into play. The observation of the two theorists remarks in particular upon the peculiar nature of the structure: the Oedipus complex both draws the lines along which desire is to travel and prevents that desire from ever being fulfilled. It imposes a destination – the mother or the father – and ensures that desire will never arrive at it. In this respect it chimes with the description I have given of taboo as the marker which acknowledges the potential for violation and 'infectious example' as well as simultaneously marking its prohibition. When Deleuze and

Guattari write of the need for a 'cure for the cure' they are describing psychoanalysis in the same terms that fit with the comment of Karl Kraus and the ambivalence of the *pharmakon*: it is a medicine and simultaneously a poison (68).

For *Anti-Oedipus* the Oedipus complex, as we have seen with its namesake, is therefore a kind of symbolic *pharmakos*: through its exorcism from psychoanalysis, whose sins and mistakes it can carry as its pollution, the true 'treasure' which Freud discovered, the flows of desire, will be restored and liberated from the triangle within which it is now trapped. This is not to argue that the Oedipus complex is innocent; like the *pharmakos*, it is simultaneously innocent and guilty: innocent insofar as it does indeed describe certain familial organisations, but also guilty of proscription in attempting to maintain and reinforce them. Resolving the Oedipus complex is supposed to be an integral part of the psychoanalytic cure, but for the writers of *Anti-Oedipus* it is a poison of a particularly infectious kind:

> What psychoanalysts invent is only the transference, a transference Oedipus, a consulting-room Oedipus of Oedipus, especially noxious and virulent, but where the subject finally has what he wants, and sucks away at his Oedipus on the full body of the analyst. But Oedipus takes shape in the family, not in the analyst's office, which merely acts as the last territoriality.
>
> (121)[46]

Deleuze and Guattari are not alone in expressing frustration with the way in which the Oedipus complex pervades and, in their opinion, has 'distorting' effects upon Freud's work (120). An equally polemical work was published just two years later by Luce Irigaray, entitled *Speculum of the Other Woman*. Irigaray tackles her disappointment with the Oedipal structure in the essay 'The Blind Spot of an Old Dream of Symmetry', and her main contention is that Freud's description of the move into, through and out of the complex leaves no space for a female libido because, even when Freud amends his theories about female sexuality, the basic model is still premised upon the little boy's experience which in turn leads back to the structure that Freud extracts from *Oedipus the King*.[47] For Irigaray, then, Freud's reliance upon Oedipal organisation and his inability to recognise that female desire may be represented entirely differently is the 'blind spot' of psychoanalysis. All these critiques represent attempts to unhinge the boundary lines psychoanalysis draws around itself and its theoretical edifice.

More recently, Judith Butler, in *Antigone's Claim*, has questioned the Oedipal configuration of the relationships that Freud works with in the light of new emergent sexualities and familial organisations:

> What will the legacy of Oedipus be for those who are formed in these [gay or non-nuclear] situations, where positions are hardly clear, where the place of the father is dispersed, where the place of the mother is multiply occupied or displaced, where the symbolic in its stasis no longer holds?[48]

It is, as perhaps a card-carrying psychoanalyst might argue, immaterial who in particular fulfils the roles of mother and father: the structure would be the same since there would always be a father-figure or mother-substitute. However, for the more sceptical, there is undeniable resonance in the criticism that Freudian psychoanalysis does not see the family in terms other than the triadic 'daddy-mommy-me' formulation so castigated by Deleuze and Guattari. Butler's compelling question, taken from George Steiner, addresses the feminist problem with the Oedipus complex articulated by Irigaray when it asks: 'What would happen if psychoanalysis were to have taken Antigone rather than Oedipus as its point of departure?'[49]

Without assessing the relative merits, successes and shortcomings of these separate critics and the issues they raise, it is clear that while they all value certain aspects of psychoanalysis, the point upon which they concur is that the Oedipus complex as Freud described it is deeply flawed, if not completely inappropriate. As Oedipus is the *pharmakos* of the Sophoclean tragedy, the Oedipus complex is the chosen scapegoat for these critics; it is that which, plucked from the inside of psychoanalysis, will purify psychoanalytic thought by being ousted, put beyond the walls. They all recognise, though, that the problem is not easily removable since so far-reaching is the Oedipus complex that it underpins the whole of the psychoanalytic edifice: the *pharmakos* carrying the failings of the psychoanalytic plague is difficult to exile, let alone to execute. The interventions of Irigaray, Butler, Deleuze and Guattari demonstrate that the cure itself can be sick and therefore needs to be addressed; this too, with a different emphasis, is Lacan's admission in his paper 'The Freudian Thing'. What is thereby enacted in these discourses is a complication of any assumed purity of the cure and of any pure opposition between the concepts of sickness and health. Further still, all these critiques express, explicitly or otherwise, the fear that psychoanalytic teaching is infectious: that the structures it describes

are also those it passes on, transmits and transfers to the analysand. Psychoanalysis inherits a *pharmakos* from Sophocles' plague play but, at the same time, the fundamental concepts Freud develops around the analytic space rest upon a plague-logic. Theories such as those of transference, counter-transference, identification and resistance effectively name and describe an infectious and contagious set of reactions and circulation of knowledge(s) between analyst-teacher and analysand-pupil, which determine the focus of the following chapter. Freud's comment about importing plague to America can be read not just as an observation about the geographical dissemination of the new teaching but as a description of the very nature of psychoanalytic thinking.

In his writings upon the *pharmakon* Derrida notes how the language of Plato, when attempting to purify the inside, in the case of *logos*, addresses itself towards this discourse in the guise of a cure, a 'good', curative impurity which exposes what should be kept outside in order to effect this exclusion more effectively:

> Apprehended as a blend and an impurity, the *pharmakon* also acts like an aggressor or a housebreaker, threatening some internal purity and security. This definition is absolutely general and can be verified even in cases where such forced entries are valorized: the good remedy, Socratic irony, comes to disturb the intestinal organization of self-complacency.
>
> (131)

In this respect, the *pharmakon* is that which has been added to 'the pure audibility of voice' as a '*literal parasite*'; to 'cure' *logos* of this sickening parasite, the *pharmakon* must be placed outside (131, original emphasis). Addressing Freud's model of the cure, which they present either implicitly or explicitly as sick, the critiques of Deleuze, Guattari, Butler and Irigaray are, like Plato's discourse in relation to *logos*, proffering themselves as the cure for the sickness of psychoanalysis. Derrida writes of how the *pharmakos* too partakes in the enforcement of a structural exclusion; what is placed outside, plague, is referred to as evil 'both introjected and projected' (134). The *pharmakos* is the '*evil* and the *outside*, the expulsion of evil, its exclusion out of the body (and out) of the city – these are the two major senses of the character and of the ritual' (133). Derrida's account is primarily of the ambivalences of the *pharmakon*, so that the *pharmakos* is examined in its Greek specificity as a ritual that is etymologically and semantically related: in the same way that Derrida emphasises Plato's choice to use *pharmakon* as a term of

opprobrium, in his account of the *pharmakos*, what is brought out is the evil, plague, which is supposed to be exorcised from the polis. What has become apparent in my examination of the psychoanalytic plague is that it is not only the *pharmakos* which is ambivalent. Plague, as Lacan hinted, is not always evil pure and simple. Nor is it, as the phantasy of the *pharmakos* ritual would have it, easily contained. The desire to draw the lines of psychoanalysis which would decide what stays inside and what is excluded, exactly Lacan's project in 'The Freudian Thing' and much of Freud's project throughout his life, evidenced by the tense relationships with his less acquiescent acolytes, is still there in the concerns raised by Deleuze, Guattari, Irigaray and Butler.[50] Yet within the ever-increasing circulation of interventions upon Freud's corpus, their work actually propagates the psychoanalytic plague and importantly enriches debates upon the role of Oedipus, instead of effecting an ultimate exclusion or rejection.

The Oedipus complex infects psychoanalysis, but not just in the spread we have seen from its intimate beginnings in Freud's private correspondence, to the dream book and the theories of infant desire, through to Freud's hypothesis that it is at the root of society, civilization and morality. It is also an index, a symptom, as it were, of psychoanalysis's infection by and contamination with literature and myth, an infection that, as Derrida has commented, was not a side effect but an intrinsic infection, endemic and invited, despite Freud's concomitant concern with the acceptance of psychoanalysis by medical science.[51] Within Lacan's 'return to Freud' is a plea for psychoanalysis to remain a rigorous practice which adheres to the letter of Freud's law while at the same time Lacan dismisses the needs of science which demand demonstrable results, clear procedures which relate to clear cures (130). Lacan is defending the impurity of the cure and at the same time attempting to protect against what he deems to be the impurity of particular practices. As we have seen, there are structures of contagion and infection within psychoanalysis that are troubling: those which are contained in and by taboo and those which later critics warn of when they accuse the Oedipus complex of passing its infection, what Deleuze and Guattari term the 'Oedipus bacillus', from one generation to another, or from an analyst to an analysand (278). To be attentive to the ways the psychoanalytic plague spreads and, within this infectious progress, the ways in which the *pharmakos* structure so central to the Sophoclean drama is also at work in psychoanalytic thought and theorising, carries as its essential contribution an exposure of the ambivalences of psychoanalytic knowledge as both potential cure and potential infection.

This also brings into communication, with all the concomitant complications, the usually opposed categories of sickness and health, and the purity and impurity of the discourses which construct the treatment, the psychoanalytic cure. The history of the *pharmakos* figure, the debates it provokes and the way it resurfaces within the psychoanalytic plague reveal how the registers of health and illness, infection and plague, are ripe for metaphoric usage.

4

Dreaming Plague and Plaguing Dreams: The Teachings of Psychoanalysis

The analogous bond between plague and psychoanalysis corroborated by Freud's quip to Jung, as they entered New York Harbour, that the Americans 'don't realise we are bringing them the plague', is accompanied and confirmed by the psychoanalytic inheritance of Sophocles' plague play *Oedipus the King*, the contagion of taboos and the reception of Oedipus within the history of psychoanalytic thought that was established and discussed in Chapter 3.[1] Treating seriously the Freudian joke of psychoanalysis-as-plague, this chapter closely examines the teachings and the practices of Freudian psychoanalysis and demonstrates how, within the analytic session, use is made of terminology, explanations and schemas which are structurally infectious, particularly within dream interpretation. However, it is not just psychoanalytic practices that are at stake; anxieties about plagiarism and the transmission of knowledge have consequences outside the psychoanalytic domain and beyond what Deleuze and Guattari term the problem of the 'Oedipus bacillus'.[2] Plague's legacy makes itself felt across diverse areas of Freud's method of treatment in the way that psychoanalytic knowledge comes to infect the dreamer-analysand; how the language psychoanalysis employs for naming and analysing the action of the dream-work participates in a lexicon of infection; and in the way dreams can plague, both in a general sense and specifically, in the context of a dream of Freud's recounted in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900–30). Freud's dream is paradigmatic for understanding the way in which plague, associated in the dream with plagiarism, contextualises the anxieties inherent in the infectious psychoanalytic processes of knowledge transmission and psychical learning.

In his paper 'On Dreams' (1901), Freud separates dreams into three distinct types: those which are immediately understandable and do not

disguise the dream-thought; those that 'although they are connected in themselves and have a clear sense, nevertheless have a "*bewildering*" [*befremdend*] effect because we cannot see how to fit that sense into our mental life [*Seelenleben*]'; and those which are confused and fragmentary.[3] From the German verb *befremden*, these dreams of the second type surprise, astonish, appear strange or alienate; they are outside our sense of ourselves, our sense of our own psyche. Freud provides an example:

> Such would be the case if we were to dream, for instance, that a relative of whom we were fond had died of the plague [*an der Pest gestorben*], when we had no reason for expecting, fearing or assuming any such thing; we should ask in astonishment [*verwundert*]: 'How did I get hold of such an idea?'
>
> (642/655)

Bearing in mind all Freud says in 'Totem and Taboo' and 'Civilization and Its Discontents' about the infectiousness of the example, nevertheless, this 'for instance' seems to come from nowhere, rather like the dream of which it speaks, the bewildering dream of plague. And it is plague, particularly, that is bewildering, for there are many dead relatives and fond friends in *The Interpretation of Dreams*; they even get their own subsection under 'Typical Dreams'.[4] Furthermore, this plague is bewildering insofar as it seems foreign, to come from someone or somewhere else, insofar as 'we cannot see how to fit [it] into our sense of our mental life'. Plague embodies a sense of unreality. Like plague for those who suffered it, the dream appears without announcement or explanation. 'How did I get hold of such an idea?' asks Freud's hypothetical dreamer, as though perhaps they had stolen it without knowing, plagiarised it in some way. Although Freud does not provide a direct answer to the question he poses, a rather surprising reply can be suggested by using Antonin Artaud's proposition that plague could be a 'kind of psychic entity, and would not be carried by a virus'.[5] This entity carries with it knowledge, or so the following tale of a dream would suggest, as told by Artaud at the beginning of 'The Theatre and the Plague'. The fatal ship, *Grand-Saint-Antoine*, is believed to have carried the devastating plague to Marseille in 1720. On its way from Beirut to France along the trade routes, according to Artaud, this ship requested permission to dock at Cagliari, in Sardinia, but was rudely denied entrance to the harbour by the viceroy of the town, who instead threatened to sink it with cannon fire if it did not make full sail away. The reason for this refusal, interpreted by his public as 'irresponsible, absurd, idiotic and

despotic' (16), is that the viceroy had suffered an 'afflicting' [*affligeant*] dream the previous night in which a plague disastrously ravaged both himself and his small domain (16/15). In turning away a ship which he correctly presumed was contaminated, the viceroy saved Cagliari from the last major Western European plague outbreak.[6]

In his comprehensive study *Les hommes et la peste en France et dans les pays européens et méditerranéens* (1975), Jean-Noël Biraben provides a timetable of the journey of the *Grand-Saint-Antoine*, which had taken on passengers at Tripoli in the Lebanon, docked for a few weeks in Cyprus, and, after the deaths of several sailors onboard, arrived at Livorno, Italy, where it was refused docking permission. No mention is made of Cagliari or Sardinia, only of a storm experienced off the cape of Sicily on the 22nd and 23rd May 1720.[7] Perhaps Artaud dreamed the whole incident up, despite his claim of its presence in archive material. Nonetheless, the anecdote suggests that dreams have the plaguey power to afflict, that the psychical work of dreams and their interpretations rely upon contagion and transferences which are linked to the transmission of knowledge and that dreams can be orientated towards the future. The viceroy's dream is not a straightforward prophecy since Cagliari escapes the scourge and the calamitous events of the dream are thus circumvented, but it serves as a warning and precipitates from the viceroy a decision. Artaud comments that although the plague passes Cagliari by,

> the viceroy gathers certain emanations from it in a dream; for it cannot be denied that between the viceroy and the plague a palpable communication, however subtle, was established: and it is too easy and explains nothing to limit the communication of such a disease to contagion by simple contact.
>
> (17)

It is this concept of plague as a form of psychic communication, strong enough to influence the future, which will preoccupy the following examination of psychoanalytic knowledge and dreaming.[8] This potentiality of dreams as warnings of the future is an ancient one, of course, with Biblical precedents, and is not easily dismissed.

Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams* opens by stating on the second page that the 'prehistoric' view of dreams regarded them as capable of foretelling the future, of teaching the dreamer or the interpreter about future events, but the tone of historical enquiry employed in his first chapter anticipates dismissing such an early belief (159). This is by no means to

be Freud's last word on the possible future orientation of dreams, however: the issue is returned to repeatedly, sometimes in the crucial marginalia of the footnotes, at other points addressed within the main text. While a footnote to the significant dream of Irma's injection admits that one aspect of it was prophetic (192), more often than not in the actual body of the text Freud asserts that this view of dreams as potentially able to inform us of the future 'has no basis at all in fact' (132).[9] Another marginalia point, added in 1911 as an example of punning and play in dream interpretation, recounts Alexander the Great's dream of a satyr dancing upon his shield during the lengthy and disheartening besiegement of Tyre. Aristander provided the interpretation, extrapolating from the words for satyr and Tyre the expression 'Tyre is thine', thus encouraging Alexander to continue the siege and to win the city (173). Freud does not comment upon the prophecy of the dream at this point, although much later in *The Interpretation of Dreams* he explains such dreams as 'a *form of expression* of impulses' (774). While the dream is a representation of a wish fulfilled, it also suggests that without it Alexander might have abandoned the siege and not won the city.

The problem for Freud stems precisely from his assertion, the mainspring of his argument in fact, that dreams are a form of wish-fulfilment. The verb 'to wish' is grammatically uncomfortable: even in its present tense form it has a future orientation and is often taught, in English foreign language text books at least, as an addendum to the future tense or the conditional, which is another way of expressing a wish and one occasionally employed in *The Interpretation of Dreams* in the construction of the dream thoughts as an 'if only' (568). The closing sentences of Freud's dream book once again return to the future and dreams in a strange sentence which collapses past and future into the present of the dream:

> Nevertheless, the ancient belief that dreams foretell the future is not wholly devoid of truth. By picturing our wishes as fulfilled, the dream leads [*führt*] us into the future. But this future, which the dreamer pictures as the present, has been moulded by his indestructible wish into a perfect likeness of the past.
>
> (783, translation modified/626)[10]

David Wills, in his book *Prosthesis*, notes the uncomfortable temporality of this conclusion, pointing out that the 'present' of the dream, given Freud's claim that the unconscious does not recognise time as we understand it consciously, is only constructed as present in relation to

a concept of the wish as 'past', both of which are only reconstructed as such within the space of the analysis itself. This leads him to suggest that,

> [t]he dream might be better described as a future projection than a wish fulfilment, for as long as a desire has the status of a hallucination, it continues to pose itself in terms of a hypothesis that I find difficult to conceive of without the stamp of the future: it refers by definition to something that has not (yet) occurred. Or else … we might read the dream as an intermediate fulfilment of a wish that nevertheless continues to project itself towards the conscious recognition that only analysis, or another type of satisfaction, can provide.[11]

Two points come through strongly from Wills's reading: firstly the role of retrospective construction which the analysis imposes upon the temporality of conscious and unconscious thinking; secondly, that a wish [*Wunsch*] is a desire [*Begierde*], something easy to forget in *The Interpretation of Dreams* which more often than not insists on using the first term.[12] Wills concludes that the temporality of dreaming 'runs into the same sort of problems that *plague* the topography of the unconscious, complications that Freud came progressively to acknowledge in the course of his research' (116, my emphasis). This plaguing, an effect of the dream linked to desire and to the future, is what appears as one of the symptoms of Freud's dream of the Three Fates.

Knowledge of psychoanalysis, and Freud is quite certain about this, has the potential to infect our dreams and their wishes. Reading *The Interpretation of Dreams* may well have the effect upon some readers of producing 'counter-wish dreams' [*Gegenwunschträume*] (242/163): dreams in which a wish is represented as unfilled precisely in order to prove that Freud is wrong, and in the space of analysis this is invariably so:

> These dreams appear regularly in the course of my treatments when a patient is in a state of resistance to me; and I can count almost certainly on provoking one of them after I have explained to a patient for the first time my theory that dreams are fulfilments of wishes.
> (241–2/163)

A footnote added in 1911 mentions that such dreams were also reported by those who had heard Freud lecture upon the topic of dreams as

wish-fulfilments. Psychoanalytic knowledge is here acting as though it were the 'psychic entity' of which Artaud speaks, infecting and plaguing our dreams. A dream, Freud insists, is a symptom. In the case of counter-wish dreams it is symptom of contact with psychoanalysis itself: going through psychoanalysis is also a learning of psychoanalysis and, as such, a learning of the unconscious self. We are in the realm of the transference of knowledge, with an appropriation of psychoanalytic knowledge being undertaken by the desires of the dreamer, which is consequently orientated towards the future space of a psychoanalytic encounter wherein Freud is to interpret the refutation of his theories in the session.

Counter-wish dreams are a form of psychical resistance, an attempt to disavow the work and progress of analysis. There is an inescapable infectiousness within Freud's account of the dream as a wish-fulfilment: possible denials are simply circumvented by already including them under the rubric of resistance. Thus, the two options open to the dreamer-analysand, either to accept or reject the theory, prove the theory to be correct within Freud's schema, for if the patient rejects that a dream is a wish-fulfilment, and, as we have seen, even if they have a dream which supports their rejection, this is interpreted by the analyst as a form of wish-fulfilment. If rejection is psychic resistance and the patient is caught within a contagious circularity, then there is no refutation available to them which is not already contaminated by psychoanalytic structures.[13] Resistance is one way Freud explains the patient's avoidance of psychoanalytic work intended to bring to consciousness the repressed material. Another strategy patients adopt is that of transference, whereby the feelings evoked and exposed by analysis are transferred on to or come to infect the relationship between the analyst and the analysand.

In German the word 'transference' has medical connotations which its English counterpart does not carry: the verb *übertragen* is also the medical term used to describe the action of transmitting or passing on a disease. This usage in modern German is fairly new: although the relationship between transference and infection is made in the Grimm brothers' dictionary, begun in 1838, the word was not, as it is now, primarily attached to disease, an association which has since become prevalent and spread itself into medical terminology.[14] Its deployment within psychoanalysis is varied and not limited to naming the interaction between analyst and analysand. Initially in *The Interpretation of Dreams* it is linked to displacement in the dreamwork, whereby elements of a high psychical value are de-intensified and elements of low

psychical value have transmitted to them a new value to disguise the unconscious wish being represented in the dream:

> If that is so, *a transference* [*Übertragung*] *and displacement of psychical intensities* occurs in the process of dream-formation, and it is as a result of these that the difference between the text of the dream-content and that of the dream-thoughts comes about.
>
> (417/313, emphasis Freud's)

But this is not all Freud has to impart about transference: the 'day's residues' too become a 'point of attachment for a transference' (717). The figurative language employed by Freud suggests a model which, given the plaguing under investigation, has a striking similarity to the way in which a disease takes advantage of the body's weakness to enter and begin to spread:

> From indications derived from the psychoanalysis of the neuroses, I consider that these unconscious wishes are always alert [*rege*], ready at any time to find their way to expression when an opportunity arises for allying themselves with an impulse from the conscious and for transferring [*übertragen*] their own great intensity onto the latter's lesser one.
>
> (704, translation modified/558)

There is a plaguey-plagiarism afoot here, with the unconscious wish 'appropriating what it can' from the conscious, or from the day's residues, and infecting it with its own psychical intensity, which can be stripped by displacement later in the dream-work.

It is not only in displacement that the infectiousness of transference is carried out: a 'composite figure' (434) in a dream, or the ego picking up elements from an other and attaching them to itself, are also signs that transference has occurred:

> On other occasions, when my own ego *does* appear in the dream, the situation in which it occurs teaches [*lehrt*] me that some other person lies concealed, by identification, behind my ego. In that case the dream should warn [*mahnen*] me to transfer [*übertragen*] on to myself, when I am interpreting the dream, the concealed common element attached to this other person.
>
> (435, translation modified/328)

The dream has a twofold purpose according to Freud here: it is the scene of learning, of knowledge acquisition, the dream teaches us; it is also a warning, a warning aimed specifically at the scene of interpretation, the analysis which is to come.

One of Freud's own dreams, known in English as the Three Fates, allows for a more specific exploration of how dreams might 'plague' within these various psychoanalytic constructions, as well as prompting questions about the relationship between desire and its structural future-orientation as wishing. The dream itself is simple and initiated, Freud believes, by hunger, but the associations it produces are some of the most congested and unexplained in the whole book. This is the dream in full:

> *I went into a kitchen in search of some pudding. Three women were standing in it; one of them was the hostess of the inn and was twisting something about in her hand, as though she was making Knödel* [*dumplings*]. *She answered that I must wait until she was ready*. (These were not definite spoken words.) *I felt impatient and went off with a sense of injury. I put on an overcoat. But the first one I tried on was too long for me. I took it off, rather surprised to find it was trimmed with fur. A second one that I put on had a long strip with a Turkish design let into it. A stranger with a long face and a short pointed beard came up and tried to prevent my putting it on, saying it was his. I showed him that it was embroidered all over with a Turkish pattern. He asked 'What have the Turkish (designs, stripes …) to do with you?' But we then became quite friendly with one another*.
>
> (294–5/210)

Freud's immediate association is with literature: a novel he had read as a teenager, which featured a man calling the names of the three women who had brought the greatest sorrow and happiness to his life. One of these women, the only one Freud mentions, was named '*Pélagie*' (295). *Pelage*, in French as in English, refers to the fur of an animal: their coat. The dream is of course about coats, one of which is actually fur-lined, but Freud does not note, or perhaps know, that the woman's name is close to the French and the English for a mammal's coat. He does inform the reader of how overcoats stand for prophylactics, although within the later dream symbolism section of *The Interpretation of Dreams* an overcoat represents the penis itself, due, Freud suspects, to a verbal congruity between *Mantel*, overcoat, and *Mann*, man (473). The next association to arise is that of the three fates, from which the dream,

as listed by the editor James Strachey in the back of the book, takes its name. In Greek mythology these three female goddesses determine life: Clotho spins the thread from which life is lived; this is measured out by Lachesis and severed by Atropos when life is fated to end. With fate the length of life and time of death, the future, in short, is a pre-planned certainty reigned over by omnipotent powers to which one should be resigned, as opposed to a life in which the individual has a sense of autonomy. Thus the concept of fate almost closes down a thinking of the future in its negation of individual responsibility and instrumentality or, as Freud is to express in a footnote to the dream analysis, by fostering an attitude of 'submission to the inevitable' (296).

'And now for the dumplings – the *Knödel*!' (296). In this association, Freud recalls how one of his university professors had taken legal action against a certain '*Knödl*' for – the emphasis is Freud's – '*plagiarism*' [*Plagiat*] of the professor's work (296 translation modified/212). Etymologically, 'plague' and 'plagiarise' are not associated; they have a homonymic similarity, certainly, but the former derives from the Latin *plaga*, to wound or to strike, while the latter's Latinate root is *plagium*, meaning kidnapping. For psychoanalytic dream interpretation, however, the assonance, in German as in English, is enough of a verbal bridge [*Brücke* 296]: 'It may seem strange that the dream-work makes use of verbal ambiguity, but further experience will teach us that the occurrence is a common one'.[15] A 'chain of associations' is constructed, then, of which Freud comments that he 'could never have constructed it in waking life unless it had already been constructed by the dream-work' (297). Dream analysis, in other words, or self-analysis in this case, can teach us about our unconscious thought processes; it is the site of learning, the 'royal road to' 'the unconscious' as the oft-quoted expression has it (769). Here is what Freud's dream associations have communicated to him about the links in his unconscious thinking: '*Pélagie – plagiarizing – plagiostomes* or sharks [*Haifische*] – *a fish's swimming-bladder* [*Fischblase*]' (297). A footnote explains that the plagiostomes have not been elaborated upon due to an 'unpleasant occasion on which I had disgraced myself' (296), while the oddity of the fish bladder remains unaccounted for and suspended. The bridge that Freud has identified between these associations is not merely technical but infects the associations themselves, leading us to a moment in which they come into conflict with one another and, significantly, a link between plague and dreaming is established:

> And, as though the need to set up forced connections regarded *nothing* as sacred, the honoured name of Brücke (cf. the verbal *bridge*

above) reminded me of the Institute in which I spent the happiest hours of my student life, free from all other desires –

> So wird's Euch an der Weisheit *Brüsten*
> Mit jedem Tage mehr gelüsten
> [Thus, at the *breasts* of Wisdom clinging,
> Thou'lt find each day a greater rapture bringing]

– in complete contrast to the desires which *plague* me while I dream [*im vollsten Gegensatz zu den Begierden, die mich, während ich träume*, plagen].

(297 translation modified/212, emphasis Freud's)[16]

The italicisation of 'plague' carries it into contact with the other words in the chain of associations, but at the same time it stands outside of the list, connected more immediately with desire, through the italicisation of 'breasts', and with the dreaming process itself. Freud admits he is plagued by the desires in his dreams; but if dreams are an expression of desire in the form of wish fulfilment, then Freud is plagued by dreams themselves. On the one hand this observation is self-evident from the size of *The Interpretation of Dreams* and from the continual amendments, qualifications, footnotes and additions that he was to make between its first publication in 1900 and the final publication in German during his lifetime in 1929. On the other, if we bear in mind Artaud's suggestion that plague could be a psychic entity of exactly the sort which may infect our dreams and potentially impart knowledge that could direct our decisions in the future, then this opens a whole new vein for thinking about the relationship between dreaming and desires.

Freud has more to say about the dream of the Three Fates. Associations multiply rapidly in the subsequent sentence, which invokes another teacher, Fleischl, 'scales of epidermis', madness and cocaine; the connection between these remains largely unexplained, although Freud links each respectively to earlier associations (296). It is to Ernest Jones's biography *The Life and Works of Sigmund Freud* that we must turn to learn the tragic network of memories being carried forward and condensed at this point in the analysis. Between 1884 and 1887, Freud had been trying to establish a name for himself by making an important discovery which would bring him enough money to wed. To these ends, in 1884 he obtained some cocaine, the physiological effect of which interested him. Jones supplies a quote from Freud which blames a visit to his fiancée for the curtailment of his work in this area and its subsequent

successful uptake by a friend. Freud comments: '[I] contented myself in my monograph on the subject with prophesying that further uses for it would soon be found'.[17] The future of cocaine, and Freud's involvement with it, sadly does not end with this prophecy for the future. In the first place, he shared his ideas with two colleagues, Leopold Königstein and Carl Koller; both went on, after Freud's prompting, to experiment successfully with cocaine as an anaesthetic for eye operations, the former arriving at his discovery a little too late. Koller, who consequently carved a successful career path in New York, gradually began to view the discovery as entirely his own and to claim priority over it, firstly by misdating Freud's paper in his citations so that it was contemporaneous or later than his own work and, eventually, by dropping any reference to Freud at all. Clearly, then, cocaine and its uses were associated for Freud with the appropriation of ideas, a form of plagiarism and with a missed opportunity. *The Life and Works of Sigmund Freud* quotes an early letter to his sister-in-law that commented '[c]ocaine has brought me a great deal of credit, but the lion's share has gone elsewhere'; Jones adds '[h]e had to note that Koller's discovery had produced an "enormous sensation" throughout the world' (98).

During this period Freud took small quantities of the drug and became convinced of its therapeutic properties. Flieschl, a man he highly respected, a friend and assistant of Brücke's, had a debilitating and deteriorating condition; the use of morphine for pain relief had led to a serious addiction. Freud provided his friend with cocaine in an attempt to wean him from morphine and became quite hopeful that the results would have a lasting scientific impact. The reverse was true; Fleischl became quickly addicted to cocaine, eventually consuming a gram a day, injected under the epidermis, which in turn engendered horrific hallucinations. Freud's enthusiasm had led to his friend's condition degenerating still further. The paper on cocaine, the recommendations to friends and patients and Freud's own experience of the drug as an enlivening antidote to depression made quite an impression, but Jones comments that eventually Freud's ideas on cocaine began to be viewed with increasing hostility in the scientific community. He was finally accused of 'unleashing evil on the world' (104). If this sounds exaggerated, his detractors had gone so far as to call cocaine the 'third scourge of humanity', after those of alcohol and morphia (93, 104). Had Freud begun a plague of cocaine use? He had certainly advocated it in the highest terms, prescribing it for patients and friends, taking it himself and giving small quantities to his fiancée and sisters: his monograph and the discussion it provoked resulted,

Jones comments, in Freud being 'plagued by having to answer letters demanding further information or help' (102). The drug was closely bound to his desire to make a future name for himself; in the Three Fates dream analysis, Freud notes the importance of names within the dream and concedes that the ambiguities in the names work 'as an act of retribution' [*Vergeltung*] (298/213). Freud ascribes the retribution to a desire prompted by the frequency with which his own name had been punned upon, yet, in the context of the 'cocaine affair', as Jones calls it, the desire for retribution is also linked to plagiarism and thus to Koller. Given the biographical information which Jones supplies, the swift allusions to cocaine, Fleischl, madness and skin make perfect sense within a dream whose associations link plague with plagiarism.

Finally in the analysis of the Three Fates dream, Freud locates from this plethora of associations a dream-thought which has the rhythm of a mantra: '[o]ne should never neglect an opportunity but always take what one can even when it involves doing a small wrong. One should never neglect an opportunity, since life is short and death is inevitable' (298–9).[18] In the light of the 'cocaine affair', this dream-thought is both a self-justification of the risk Freud took with Fleischl and a self-accusation regarding the discovery of the anaesthetic properties of the drug, which he had failed to capitalise upon but had, without fully realising the implications, passed the knowledge of to another. The inevitability of death, signalled in the associations by the Three Fates, is the excuse by which desire can be indulged and satisfied despite any small ethical or moral impediments. We might be forgiven for enquiring when the 'if only' or 'I wish' are to enter the scene, but our desires are to be peremptorily frustrated:

> Because this lesson of '*carpe diem*' had among other meanings a sexual one and because the desire [*die Begierde*] it expressed did not stop short of doing wrong, it had reason to dread the censorship and was obliged to conceal itself behind a dream. All kinds of thoughts having a *contrary* sense then found voice: memories of a time when the dreamer was content with *spiritual* food, restraining thoughts of every kind and even threats of the most revolting [*ekelhaften*] sexual punishments.
>
> (299/214)

Strachey has here inserted the word 'lesson', absent from the German, but the addition is perhaps appropriate, for Freud is learning about himself through his dream analysis. That this sentiment of *carpe diem*

has a sexual meaning is not surprising given the sexual symbolism attributed by Freud to overcoats, but that it expressed a desire that 'did not stop short of doing wrong' [*die Begierde, (die) vor dem Unrecht nicht Halt machen will*] is a curious claim (299/214). How can a desire, which like a wish is a future projection, be thought of as doing wrong? Where or who is the agency here? Is it Freud or his desire that has done wrong, and if it is the latter, why the introduction of a Christo-Judaic moralism which on the whole is rejected by Freud in his frank discussions of dreams and their contents? Is this the sort of desire that plagues the father of psychoanalysis, one that stops at nothing to make a name for itself, or fulfil its sexual aims?[19] But this is where the dream and its associations abruptly and rather tantalisingly finish. Freud has already mentioned in connection with another truncated part of this analysis that he has to break off because the 'personal sacrifice demanded would be too great' (297); presumably, given the allusions that are provided, it is a similar instinct that leaves this dream analysis, like so many others, manifestly incomplete in its articulation of the latent dream thoughts.

The dream, for both the frustrated reader and for Freud as the dreamer, is a question of knowledge and desire, or desire as hunger-for-knowledge. This is apparent in the Goethe quotation which Freud takes from *Faust* when he recalls his student days at the Institute. Provided by Strachey in a footnote, Bayard Taylor's translation of Goethe's lines from the first part of *Faust* has somewhat refined them as well as grammatically forced the rhyme in English onto 'clinging' and 'bringing' rather than the more salacious emphasis supplied by the position and rhyme of '*Brüsten*' and '*gelüsten*'.[20] The feeding from the breasts of wisdom in this couplet takes the reader back to the beginning of Freud's associations with the Three Fates, where he comments, '[l]ove and hunger, I reflected, meet at a woman's breast' (295). This observation is immediately followed by an example that Freud uses to explain the psychoanalytic concept of 'deferred action' [*Nachträglichkeit*], whereby a previous memory trace, experience or impression is given new meaning and psychical impact, and is thus revived and revised, through a later event which calls it to mind:

> A young man who was a great admirer of feminine beauty was talking once – so the story went – of the good-looking wet-nurse who had suckled him when he was a baby: 'I'm sorry,' he remarked, 'that I didn't make a better use of my opportunity.'
>
> (295/211)

This rather crude but cheekily amusing anecdote accords with the only dream-thought that is revealed to us: *carpe diem*. Yet the exhortation '*carpe diem*' shares the same temporal difficulty as the young man's story and Freud's regret that he did not foresee the uses of cocaine as an anaesthetic: the day is only worth seizing if it is a good day, offering opportunity, and that is only possible to know after the day has passed. Far from implying that once it was knowledge – or wisdom – alone which nourished and satisfied the young Freud, Goethe's rhyming couplet, along with the anecdote illustrating deferred action, mischievously reinforce a conflation between desire for knowledge and desire for carnality, and imply a regret that these desires were not met with as much vigour as they might have been had they been properly recognised at the time. The associations, in other words, work directly to undermine Freud's assertion that at the Institute he was 'free from other desires' (297). That those desires, both sexual and intellectual, are perhaps inseparable and continue to plague Freud as they had done in the past is what the Three Fates dream and its associations communicate.

Specific to this conjunction of desire and knowledge is the dream's evocation for Freud of memories related to scenes of knowledge acquisition: a lesson from his mother about the epidermis; his teacher Fleischl; the Institute; the unpleasant affair of the plagiostomes; the reference to cocaine; and finally, the revealing association of plagiarism, in itself an issue of ownership over knowledge, and a fear which indeed could be said to have plagued Freud in his relationships with C. G. Jung, Alfred Adler, Wilhelm Reich, Sandor Ferenczi and Victor Tausk, to name a few. The ownership and appropriation of psychoanalytic knowledge was under much contention in the early days of the International Psychoanalytic Association and Freud was paternally possessive of his originality and the future direction of the movement. Plagiarism has not only a homonymic relation with plague but also a conceptual one. Freud's definition of plagiarism in The Three Fates analysis is at once correct and excessive: 'appropriating whatever one can, even though it belongs to someone else' (296). True, plagiarism is appropriating what is not one's own work but the key elision here is the act of deception, for any writing can be said to appropriate ideas, opinions and viewpoints: it is not plagiarism until it is passed off as one's own work and the debt to others is deliberately unattributed, as Koller began to do in his later writings upon cocaine. Neil Hertz, in his book *The End of the Line*, has suggested that the fear of plagiarism is a fear revolving around the space of the teaching–learning dynamic: 'the plagiarizing of students can focus their teachers' anxieties about writing in general,

more particularly about the kind of "writing" involved in teaching – the inscription of a culture's heritage on the minds of its young'.[21] In other words, the act of plagiarism on the part of a student enables educators and teachers to transfer onto this misdeed their fears about their own role in the transmission of knowledge and to what extent any transmission of this sort is structurally, if not legally, a form of unwritten plagiarism. Discrediting one form of appropriation comes to reinforce the legitimacy of another. Such fears betray a logic of infection when it comes to the use and transfer of knowledge: what is at stake here in Freud's association of plague and plagiarism is the knowledge of psychoanalysis itself.

Plagiarism and the fear it provokes is a fear about the future usage of knowledge. Freud's dream associations circulate around scenes where knowledge is acquired or passed on; the writing of *The Interpretation of Dreams* is similarly the scene of knowledge transmission, one whose future Freud could not abandon to the Fates but had to return to time and again to amend and enlarge upon. Hertz, reading Paul Roazen's work on the relationship between Freud and his young disciple Victor Tausk, comments:

> Roazen's recent interviews with [Helene] Deutsch convinced him that Freud's motives for refusing Tausk [as a patient] were bound up with fears of plagiarism: Freud spoke of Tausk's making an 'uncanny' impression upon him, of the impossible complications that would result if Tausk became his patient, for he (Tausk) would be likely to imagine that ideas he had picked up in his hours with Freud were actually his own, and so on.
>
> (115–6)

Deutsch, an analyst herself, was in analysis with Freud as part of her compulsory training; Tausk, as part of his movement towards becoming an analyst, became her patient and later, it seems, her lover. According to Roazen, the conversations in each training analysis became more and more infected by the relationship between these three, with Deutsch discussing Tausk with Freud, and Freud with Tausk. Freud eventually broke this contagious and triangular relationship by asking Deutsch to choose between continuing with him or with Tausk. She chose the former. Roazen's suspicion that Freud was concerned about the ownership, transference and future use of psychoanalytic knowledge by the young Tausk, who might, by imagining, appropriate the ideas of Freud and pass them off as his own, is a suspicion aroused by the contagion

implied within the structure of the analytical training session. This scene of learning provoked anxieties about the legitimate or illegitimate use of the knowledge transmitted within its relational space. Jacques Derrida notes this relationship between the psychoanalytic term transference [*Übertragung*] and the transference of knowledge in a brief aside within an essay on psychoanalysis, 'To Speculate – "On Freud"': 'I specify in passing: no legacy without transference. Which also gives us to understand that if every legacy is propagated in transference, it can get underway only in the form of an inheritance of transference.'[22] The potential future plagiarism which was 'plaguing' Freud in relation to the legacy he was imparting to Tausk imposed itself in the form of a decision to terminate one of the scenes of psychoanalytic learning and transferral of knowledge in the relationship between the three.

Freud's analysis of his dream of the Three Fates, although it remains incomplete because he fails to reveal to us the unconscious wish that underpins it, has very much to do with the wishes and desires that plague psychoanalysis so specifically within the question of infectious transference. As it is employed in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, transference refers to the transmission of unconscious psychical energy, but within the wider Freudian oeuvre, as already noted, it articulates a moment of psychical resistance upon the part of the analysand within the space of analysis. For Freud this type of transference is inevitable but initially negative: it blocks analysis until the patient recognises their transference for what it is and works towards uncovering the repressed material of which it is symptomatic. In the Freudian schema, transference is an enactment of the patient's; the analyst does not participate in it other than to be a substitute figure and to explain, to reveal the role of transference, enabling the patient to recognise the misdirection of their emotion and to move beyond it. Christopher Bollas, a practising psychoanalyst, proffers a more reciprocal and mutually infectious account of transference within the analytic space. In his book *Cracking Up: The Work of Unconscious Experience* he posits that during the analytic session there occurs an 'unconscious communication' between analyst and analysand.[23] This theory rests upon Bollas's central claim, in this and other works, that 'the total dream process is a model of all unconscious experience' (3). He argues that the analyst's response to what the analysand tells her is 'a kind of *countertransference dreaming*' in which the analyst listens with 'evenly hovering attentiveness' and is constantly,

> displacing the patient's narrative into a counternarrative, condensing the patient's descriptions with this patient's other accounts,

> incorporating the analysand's mood into his own emotional constellation, altering an image or changing a word, bearing the analysand's psychic state within his own body, thus creating his own somatic double to the patient.
>
> (12)

The analyst is 'dreaming' a counter dream to the one they are hearing from the analysand. Bollas's use of dream work terminology to describe what happens during analysis is strategic: he is attempting to articulate the 'unconscious thinking' that, according to him, both participants in the scene of analysis are inevitably implicated in (13).[24] Although he claims that 'the analyst *unconsciously* deconstructs – displaces, condenses, substitutes, the patient' (12), his work clearly challenges the usual Freudian separation between conscious and unconscious: in the quote above it is difficult to ascertain whether these acts are conscious and this is further complicated by the employment of terms for unconscious work. Yet Bollas asserts that we can develop our 'unconscious sensibility' (14), meaning that we can teach ourselves to value, encourage and pay attention to our free associations, whether we are the analyst or the patient. The result is a mutually infectious analysis, with an interactive two-way transference of ideas and experience, as opposed to the more traditionally static model in which the analyst, while listening to and interpreting for the analysand, is not psychically affected by this process. Such an analytic space is one in which unconscious communication occurs between the analyst and the analysand, leading Bollas to suggestively posit that the unconscious of the analysand may indeed infect and 'transmit' or 'transfer' on to the thinking of the analyst:

> By examining the symptom or the pathological structure we *learn* more about the nature of unconscious life, which becomes intriguing if we consider that the illness itself may *transmit* the patient's inner unconscious contents to the other. Does *transmitting* the illness become a way to convey unconscious contents?
>
> (27, my emphasis)

Bollas's formulation incorporates the two senses of *übertragen*: transmitting psychical intensity and, at the same time, illness. Transference, both in its dream-work operation of shifting and disguising psychical intensity, and in the space opened up between analyst and analysand within the analytical session itself, has a plaguey-plagiarising action of

transmission and appropriation: it is intrinsic to the scene of learning which comprises the psychoanalytic session.

The Three Fates is a paradigmatic dream about dreaming and its analysis: Freud's associations of plague, desire, plagiarism, and the evocation of scenes of teaching and learning have a surprising contiguity with the concerns of psychoanalysis itself, in particular those involved in the interpretation of the dream as symptom. In other words, interpreting the dream teaches Freud about dream interpretation. At once, this seems simplistically obvious, yet it is also contagiously circular and motile: Freud's dream interpretations are plagued by his desires to interpret dreams; plagued too by his desire to make psychoanalytic knowledge transmissible but still his very own, attached to his (future) name. In suggesting that Freud is plagued by wish-fulfilment, and that the Three Fates dream reveals this, even while it fails to reveal its own wish-fulfilling desires, I am identifying what I have referred to as a logic of plaguey-plagiarism. That is, at work in Freud's articulation of how the dream-work disguises the wish in transference, condensation and displacement, there is an infectious transmission of ideas and energy which accords with Artaud's suggestion that plague could be a psychic, as opposed to a medical phenomenon, and one which imparts knowledge. In psychoanalysis, this wish-fulfilment, only reconstructed within the psychoanalytic session, is how we learn about our unconscious desires; thus the dream, with its plaguing desires, is a 'psychic communication' orientated towards its future interpretation, which accords with Artaud's description of plague. As seen in Chapter 3, psychoanalysis is perceived as plaguelike by its detractors, and references to infection are used to describe its spread. With Oedipus, it carries within it a special plague legacy. Furthermore, in this examination of plague and dreaming, psychoanalysis has been shown to construct itself with structures and concepts which draw upon infection and plague logic to describe and disseminate themselves.

5

Plague, Jews and Fascist Anti-Semites: 'The Great Incurable Malady'

In her small but influential book *Illness as Metaphor*, Susan Sontag observes how plague is perceived as a disease which afflicts a whole community not, like cancer or tuberculosis, as a force which isolates and sets the individual aside from society.[1] This perception is rooted in plague's historical and cultural legacy, as much as stemming from a specific symptom profile. Each different disease carries its set of unique meanings, forged from the official and unofficial responses they provoke, and these associations become even more complex when the disease in question, like plague, has a mysterious aetiology for those it afflicts. As Sontag outlines:

> Nothing is more punitive than to give a disease a meaning – that meaning being invariably a moralistic one. Any important disease whose causality is murky, and for which treatment is ineffectual, tends to be awash in significance. First, the subjects of deepest dread (corruption, decay, pollution, anomie, weakness) are identified with the disease. Then, in the name of the disease (that is, using it as a metaphor), that horror is imposed on other things. The disease becomes adjectival.
>
> (62–3)

The moral and 'adjectival' mobilisation of plague is a virulent aspect of anti-Semitic and fascist political discourse of the 1930s. Over the decade, Nazi rhetoric against the Jews gained considerable strength and became widely disseminated, marking the return and revival of an accusatory discourse which associated Jews with plague. The earliest written evidence of such a link appears in The Old Testament, which carries many examples of God punishing the Jews and also their enemies with

plagues of different kinds. The perception of Jews as plague-bringers or plague-carriers was existent in early religious and rhetorical discourse, and these views linked Jewishness to plague in such a way that the Jews themselves began to be perceived as a threat afflicting the community. Martin Luther articulated what Hitler would go on to echo: Jews *are* the plague. The scapegoating examined in Chapter 3 in relation to the *pharmakos* of ancient plague rituals is an active component of Nazi anti-Semitism. The way in which community and politics are construed and accompanied by anti-Semitism in the period can be usefully understood through a consideration of the work of René Girard on community structures and Jacques Derrida's discussion of autoimmunity within the social bond. Both thinkers are appropriate, if in very different ways, because their theories of social structures draw upon the language of the body, contagion and infection.

In the 1930s it was not only anti-Semites who deployed plague as a rhetorical vehicle: Hitler's use of plague was incorporated and turned around, back upon itself, in the first major analysis of the psychology of fascism, published by Wilhelm Reich. As a Jew, Reich was particularly aware of the role that anti-Semitism played in Nazi values and rhetoric; his analysis of fascism deliberately brands it a 'plague'. Yet, despite Reich's respect for Freud and enthusiastic adoption of certain psychoanalytic concepts, his use of plague quickly spreads from naming fascism to becoming a tool in his arsenal of ways to criticise other practitioners of the 'Jewish science', psychoanalysis, and any detractors from his theories.[2] With its emphasis on psychic structures and its interest in phylogenesis, coupled with its Jewish founder and high number of Jewish practitioners, psychoanalysis constitutes a significant testing ground for the way in which plague infects discourses of accusation, blame and anti-Semitic feeling, and how attempts to resist or refute such discourses often have recourse to the very same plague metaphor.

A long history: Jews and plague

Plague visited a small village in the Bavarian mountains and proceeded to take 82 lives 300 years before Adolf Hitler became Chancellor of Germany. Faced with this terrible, unstoppable disease, the community's leaders made a promise that the villagers would perform the Tragedy of the Passion and continue to do so every ten years. According to village lore, from that moment the plague deaths ceased and so, keeping their holy vow, the community staged their first performance in the following year of 1634. The Oberammergau Passion Play was born upon

this theatrical pledge intended to avert plague.[3] The promise has been kept and the villagers renew it every decade before rehearsals begin, publicly reciting how the village was miraculously rescued. Although in its finer and more precise details the story remains uncorroborated by parish registers, most inside the village, and many visitors from without, attest to the truth of the tale (104–6). Whenever the play is performed the numbers who witness it increase: over a period of several months in 2000 it drew a total audience of more than half a million to the otherwise tiny village, and the event has become an unofficial site of pilgrimage for Christians and members of the Catholic Church (11). Yet, although Oberammergau's Passion Play has a deep spiritual resonance for some viewers and all the performers, in other circles it has been and remains highly controversial. This in turn reveals a different, much darker political and religious legacy, one in which plague is firmly aligned with Jewishness. In celebrating their rescue from plague, the Catholic Oberammergau community perform the Gospel story most open to a censorious representation of the Jews and the villagers have persevered in their very unfavourable portrayal of the Jewish involvement in Christ's death, despite accusations of anti-Semitism.

In support of Jewish claims of Oberammergau's anti-Semitic bias, Hitler's attendance at the play is often noted. In his lifetime, Hitler saw two performances of the Passion Play, one in 1930 and another in 1934, for a special tercentennial production (28). In *Table Talk*, he is reported as recommending the play on the grounds of its overt anti-Semitism:

> One of our most important tasks will be to save future generations from a similar political fate and to maintain forever watchful in them a knowledge of the menace of Jewry. For this reason alone it is vital that the Passion Play be continued at Oberammergau; for never has the menace of Jewry been so convincingly portrayed as in this presentation of what happened in the times of the Romans. There one sees in Pontius Pilate a Roman racially and intellectually so superior, that he stands out like a firm, clean rock in the middle of the muck and mire of Jewry.[4]

Large numbers of the Oberammergau villagers became members of the Nazi party; in the aftermath of the Second World War a visitor reported that inhabitants were claiming ignorance of the concentration camps and believed instead that American post-war propaganda was responsible for stories of atrocities (28). The play still provokes extreme criticism from international Jewish institutions and individuals, but the

village continues to adhere to a script based on a version purportedly first staged in 1662. Despite several quite major alterations over the centuries, the last in 1860, in the face of almost overwhelming Jewish condemnation during the twentieth-century, only small concessions have been made (58–65).[5]

Oberammergau, the debates it raises and the tale of holy promise from which it claims its legitimacy highlight how the medieval legacy of plague continues today and in our recent history, especially in its long-established association with Jewishness.[6] The Oberammergau vow and the story surrounding it do not attribute the arrival of the disease to the Jews, even though the play depicts the Jews negatively. However, during much earlier outbreaks of plague, when the Black Death spread throughout Europe in the mid- to late-fourteenth century, Jewish communities in Germany and beyond were routinely accused of well-poisoning, deliberately spreading infection and, more generally, of incurring God's displeasure and thus causing plague to fall. Jewish families were hounded and ostracised; terrible pogroms resulted from such mass suspicion and whole Jewish communities were burnt alive or chased from towns, with thousands dying, particularly in Germany.[7] There are even documented cases of pre-emptive killings of Jews, with a view to warding off the approach of plague. Anti-Semitism was by no means dormant in the period after the Black Death: in 1543, Martin Luther published the pamphlet *On the Jews and Their Lies*, in which he denounced the Jews in language and accusations that prefigure those mobilised by Hitler in *Mein Kampf*. Among the plethora of accusations Luther levels at the Jews, the link with plague is invoked several times, in the same repeated series: Jews are 'a heavy burden, a plague, a pestilence, a sheer misfortune for our country'.[8] Given these historical precedents and the prevalence of plague's association with the Jews established by them, it is unsurprising that the Oberammergau inhabitants of 1634 bequeathed to their descendants a performance which is regularly berated for its anti-Semitic slant.

Hitler's conjunction of Jewishness and plague

Commentators and historians have long commented upon the dichotomy in Nazi anti-Semitic rhetoric between the 'health' of the Aryan German and the 'sickness' of the Jews which was said to imperil the purity and well-being of the German body politic. First identified in Chapter 2, the body metaphor once again surfaces here, with its familiar blurring of the relationship between the state and the individual

body, between metaphorical and medical illness. The most oft-quoted disease example during the German 1930s is that of syphilis, which, as the cultural critic Sander Gilman has shown, was already embedded in anti-Semitic discourse well before the National Socialists came to power.[9] What has not been stressed in these discussions is the way in which Hitler's evocation of plague in relation to the Jews specifically and deliberately revives the anti-Semitic accusations prevalent during the German persecution of the Jews at the time of the Black Death. These historical references to earlier pogroms implicitly condone a similar solution. In his essay 'The Jewish Disease: Plague in Germany 1939/1989', Gilman examines two popular novels, one published during the Nazi regime, the other during the initial outbreak of AIDS. He notes that the 'traditional' view that the Black Death was caused by the Jews is used by both Hitler in his writings and speeches and by Rudolf Heinrich Daumann in his 1939 novel, but Gilman only goes as far as to comment, vis-à-vis plague, that the parallels 'would not have been lost on the contemporary reader of 1939' (221).

As is well known, Hitler's *Mein Kampf* is viscously, rabidly anti-Semitic. To review all the instances in which the Jews are labelled as plague or parasite, as disease-ridden or syphilitic, would be exhausting and, given the repetitive style and argumentation within the book, somewhat needless. Generally, in Volume One the chapters 'Causes of the Collapse' and 'Nation and Race' yield the densest accumulation of pestilential metaphors and analogies.[10] For instance, the Jew 'poisons the blood of others' (286); he 'contaminates art, literature, the theatre, [and] makes a mockery of natural feeling' (296) with his 'blood-sucking tyranny' (281). Associating the integration of Jews into German society with contagious disease in the most explicit terms, Hitler levels that:

> He [the Jew] is and remains the typical *parasite*, a sponger who like a *noxious bacillus* keeps *spreading* as soon as a favourable medium invites him. And the effect of his existence is also like that of sponges: wherever he appears, *the host* people dies out after a shorter or longer period.
>
> (277, my emphasis)

The power of the disease imagery stems from the duality of function attributable to a 'noxious bacillus' insofar as it both introduces a foreign presence into the body and at the same time saps the energy: a toxicity is added which simultaneously weakens and appropriates the body's resources. In this respect, it is a military metaphor, positing

the body as the topos within which, or upon which, a mortal battle is fought after an invasion. A bacillus, of course, does not present itself to the naked eye without the use of a microscope; it is more usually identifiable through its effects, its symptoms. The emphasis in *Mein Kampf* is on this invisible dynamic, the creeping and spreading infection of the Jewish presence in German society. The spreading is not, however, attributable to an evangelical religiosity: even in Hitler's construction, Judaism does not seek converts. Nor is it particularly an issue based upon growing numbers either, for the Jewish population did not swell disproportionately to their German counterparts in the period after the First World War. Instead it is a cultural and value-construed destruction that Hitler accuses the Jews of perpetrating, which is why he is at pains to stress that the Jews are not a religious group, but a different and less superior race. 'Jewification' (225) and 'mammonisation' (226) come to name the infection of a hostile, oppositional and destructive set of cultural values within, and perceived as working against, the German host nation.

Adding even more acutely to the multilevel implications of bubonic plague already ushered in by a language of hosts and parasites, *Mein Kampf* likens the Jews to 'a horde of rats, fighting bloodily among themselves' (274). The Jew-rat connotation reappears several times and reaches its apotheosis in the 1940 Nazi film *Der ewige Jude*, discussed in more depth later in this chapter. Maud Ellmann's comments on the consolidated contradictions of the rat's associations demonstrates why they are an appropriate vector for Nazi anti-Semitism:

> Rats have therefore come to represent the return of the archaic in the futuristic; fundamentally ambivalent, they symbolize both atavism and modernity, citification and savagery, capital and poverty, superstition and science, disease and cure.[11]

Within the rhetoric of Nazi *völkisch* values, both sides of oppositions such as capital and poverty and citification and savagery could be presented as negative and in contradistinction to the authenticity of true German sentiment, which was construed as committed to nation-building not individual wealth, to community instead of anonymous modern metropolises. Thus the Jews come to be presented as both savagely competitive, noxiously destructive, and simultaneously as part of the problem of 'modernity': in *Der ewige Jude* Jews are shown to live in dirty poverty and yet, in other shots, they are suave manipulators of high finance. The projection of German nationhood made it easier to paint

the Jews as foreign bodies, outsiders who have been merely tolerated until their presence has become unbearable.

Before long, the analogy in *Mein Kampf* between Jews and disease becomes solidified into a recognisable allusion to the previous persecution of Jews during the Black Death:

> At times of the bitterest distress, fury against him [the Jew] finally breaks out, and the plundered and ruined masses begin to defend themselves against the scourge of God. In the course of a few centuries they have come to know him; and now they feel that the mere fact of his existence is as bad as the plague.
>
> (281)

The 'historical' precedent is stressed: in the past, when plague broke out people turned against the Jews; now the Jews themselves are the plague against which 'the gravest and most ruthless decisions will have to be made,' because 'it is a half-measure to let incurably sick people steadily contaminate the remaining healthy ones' (232). Although ostensibly the 'ruthless decisions' and 'incurably sick' in these last two quotations refer to the supposed spread, by the Jews, of prostitution and syphilis, Hitler reiterates that it is not just a medical issue but one of 'the preservation of the health of our people in body and soul', which stretches across all spheres, including those of the theatre, art, literature, the press and 'public life' (232). Ellmann highlights that the rat can be deployed to represent both sickness, through the diseases they carry, and curative breakthroughs in medical knowledge because of the experiments and scientific discoveries they facilitate (68). A similar conjunction of sickness and cure can be found in the rhetoric of anti-Semitism, but in this context it is entirely nocuous: the Jews are what sicken Germany; their removal is the necessity which will cure her. Such a formulation recalls the discussion in Chapter 3 regarding the role of the *pharmakos*, the Greek sacrificial victim who took upon them plague's pollution and was sent outside the city's walls to be killed in order that the disease would abate.

Plague references frequently occur in Hitler's discussions of syphilis and Marxism: he implies that the latter is as contagious as the former, and both are blamed upon the Jews. Whereas in the quotations discussed so far the Jews themselves are likened to plague; syphilis and Marxism are considered plagues which they spread. This is a useful conflation so far as Nazi rhetoric is concerned, grafting the sexual and thus moral contagion of syphilis onto the 'evangelical' aspect of Marxist Communism's desire to raise peoples' political consciousness in order

to convince them of the exigency of revolution. Such a combination is carried over to adjectivally describe the Jews, besmirching their morals and at the same time attributing to them a political fervour for converting 'normal' Germans which, within Judaism as a religion at any rate, has no precedent. The Jewish bacillus can be portrayed as disseminating itself on a medical and ideological plane simultaneously, with Hitler and the Nazis becoming the doctors who identify and root out disease. As in the following revolting plague image, they can dissect the bubo, pronounce the diagnosis and, by implication, the cure:

> Was there any form of filth or profligacy, particularly in cultural life, without at least one Jew involved in it?
>
> If you cut even cautiously into such an abscess, you found, like a maggot in a rotting body, often dazzled by the sudden light – a kike! [*ein Jüdlein*]. … This was pestilence, spiritual pestilence, worse than the Black Death of olden times, and the people were being infected with it!
>
> (53–4)

The logical extrapolation of the first sentence, that if there is one Jew in these polluted areas of cultural life then there are presumably even more Aryan Germans, is undercut by the power of the abscess and maggot image which directly follows. Like the *Jüdlein* concealed in the abscess, the Jews who caused the Black Death have been waiting to spread their pestilence again, enacting in 1930s society a 'return of the repressed' of Jewish visibility as other and awakening the concomitant anti-Semitism. The death drive, what the literary historian J. P. Stern calls 'the true nature of National Socialism, the spirit of destruction', which characterised Nazi attitudes, rhetoric and behaviour towards the Jews, posited them in such a way that history seemed to be repeating itself, revealing at work an anti-Semitic form of the compulsion to repeat.[12] Given my earlier discussions of the plague logic within psychoanalysis, it is fitting, if unpalatable, that structures from the psychoanalytic lexicon are those which appropriately describe the dynamics at work within a rhetoric which deliberately draws upon plague to bolster its position.

Although Hitler's public denunciations of the Jews once he was in power were mainly confined to legal issues, in an interview in America in 1932 he deliberately deployed the accusation levelled at the Jewish population and used to justify their execution during the Black Death by saying: 'I ask the American people: Are you prepared to receive in your midst these well-poisoners [*Brunnenvergifter*] of the German people and the

universal spirit of Christianity?'[13] In 1939, at Wilhelmshaven, he states: 'Only when this Jewish bacillus infecting the life of peoples has been removed can one hope to establish a co-operation between the nations which shall be built upon a lasting understanding' (S 743). And in *Table Talk* he likens the 'discovery' of the 'Jewish virus' to the discoveries of the great epidemiologists Louis Pasteur and Robert Koch, who isolated the bacteria causing cholera, anthrax and tuberculosis, and helped develop cures to eliminate their presence in Western countries. Hitler exclaims, '[h]ow many diseases have their origin in the Jewish virus!' (323).

Evidently, plague and its extended vocabulary of infection and contagion was a powerful rhetorical tool in the Nazi anti-Semitic arsenal, in part due to its already noted biblical and historical association with Jewishness. The Nazis were consciously depicting the Jews as a virulent phenomenon that came from elsewhere, implanted itself in the 'host' people and fed off them, much as a bacterial disease agent does within the human system, much as, in fact, human populations have tended to view epidemic disease outbreaks. Indeed, plague has often and erroneously been thought to have begun in Egypt, the country where Moses established the 'chosenness' of the Jewish people, and which Freud, at the end of the 1930s, claimed had provoked 'much of the hostility [Jewish life] experienced and still experiences'.[14] With its rat and flea vectors, plague underlined another disease-related myth about the Jews which Hitler and the party were at pains to disseminate: namely that they were naturally dirty. Since dirt and disease, rats and fleas, all go hand in hand, if the Jews could be considered physically unclean it was merely a short step to infer, as was the case with the claims about syphilis, that they were racially impure and morally polluted. The literal blurs into the metaphoric: the body becomes a race and disease becomes adjectival, accompanied by its contagion.

The impression of Jewish dirtiness is the opening gambit of *Der ewige Jude* (The Eternal/Wandering Jew, 1940), the shocking Nazi propaganda film designed to accustom the German people to the final solution and, later, shown to concentration camp guards.[15] Still banned in Germany, the film masquerades as a 'documentary' and opens with sequences shot in the Polish ghettos of Warsaw and Lodz, which, unmentioned in the film, had been forcibly overcrowded by the Nazis' practice of using them to hold Jews scheduled for Auschwitz.[16] The voice-over commentary intones:

> The civilized Jew that we know in Germany only gives us half the picture of their racial character. This film shows genuine shots of

> the Polish ghettos. … We recognize that here there lies a plague spot which threatens the health of the Aryan people.[17]

The viewer is then presented with a filthy, fly-infested Jewish household. Shortly after these pictures comes a close up of writhing rats and close-to-floor shots of rats running almost straight toward the camera. There is an emphasis, as Maud Ellmann has noted, on the rats' snouts, which is supposed to expose the similarity with the Jewish noses, also very evident in the close-up Jewish facial shots which are juxtaposed with the rat images.[18] The commentary, in the improbable case that the implication of this analogy is lost, explains:

> Comparable with the Jewish wanderings through history are the mass migrations of an equally restless animal, the rat.… Wherever rats appear they bring ruin, they ravage human property and foodstuffs. In this way they spread disease: plague, leprosy, typhoid, cholera, dysentery, etc. They are cunning, cowardly, and cruel and are found mostly in packs. In the animal world they represent the element of craftiness and subterranean destruction – no different from the Jews among mankind![19]

Carriers of plague, the rat and the Jew are the physical manifestations of disease. To accentuate this point even further, the audience is presented with a map tracing the Jewish Diaspora in long lines and coagulated points which, as David Welch points out, resemble 'festering sores'.[20] The map is then replaced by another upon which is drawn a similar pattern, this time illustrating the supposed paths of worldwide rat dissemination. The presentation employs the tone of a quasi-scientific investigation, utilising charts, statistics, maps and 'evidence', much as a scientific documentary into the spread of plague might do.[21] The film echoes the accusations made in *Mein Kampf*: the Jews have infiltrated and control Western finance and culture; they are responsible for Marxism (a 'world plague') and radical left political upheaval; they are simultaneously unclean and deceptive; and, ultimately, they feed parasitically and destructively upon the host nation which they have chosen to live among (72).

The social bond's need for a *Pharmakos*

Hitler's personal prejudice could not have been enough alone to persuade a whole nation to accept such measures as the Nuremberg Race Laws. The defeat in 1918, the collapse of the Weimar Republic, the faltering

economy and the terms of the Versailles Treaty were all extremely complex political and economic difficulties contributing to the instability of the German nation before the rise of National Socialism. But as Hitler proposes in *Mein Kampf*, instead of an in-depth analysis of such factors, what the mass of people needed was a focus upon a common enemy:

> In general the art of all truly great national leaders at all times consists among other things primarily in not dividing the attention of a people, but in concentrating it upon a single foe.... It belongs to the genius of a great leader to make even adversaries far removed from one another seem to belong to a single category.
>
> (108)

The Jews became the nation's scapegoat: time and again in Nazi rhetoric they were presented as the problem, the disease, and their removal as the 'logical' solution and cure, a position which had been occupied before by their Black Death predecessors and which recalls the ritual of the ancient Greek *pharmakos*.

The work of René Girard in *Violence and the Sacred* (1972) outlines the way in which primitive communities needed and effected the identification and persecution of such a scapegoat group, and how, therefore, these communities relied upon a similar structure to that of the *pharmakos* sacrifice, whether or not this was explicitly acknowledged. Girard argues that all religions and rituals are at heart posited on a desire to reduce violence within the community. More specifically, they provide the community with a legitimated form of violence against the sacrificial victim, or its substitute, which channels the chaotic and uncontrolled violence that may otherwise break out and destroy community relations. Examining the role of human sacrifice in primitive societies he notes that the chosen victim is 'incapable of establishing or sharing the social bonds that link the rest of the inhabitants. Their status as foreigners or enemies, their servile condition or simply their age prevents these future victims from fully integrating themselves into the community' (12). The anti-Semitism of the Nazis was concerned to 'unveil' the assimilated German Jew as a destructive foreigner who did not share or participate in the cultural values held by the Aryan people but who instead had an international racial agenda of his or her own. Hence the juxtaposition in *Der ewige Jude* of the Jews in the Polish ghettos with their counterparts in sophisticated German society and the film's assertion that despite external differences of dress and behaviour, they are the one and the same 'Jewish virus' underneath.

The bond the *pharmakos* provides and the crises it helps displace are what Hitler is referring to when he talks about the need for a 'single foe'. The Jews, of course, were not presented as victims or with any of the sacred overtones that accompanied the *pharmakos* or the sacrificial victim in primitive or ancient societies. However, as J. P. Stern has averred in *Hitler: The Führer and the People*, sacrifice was an intrinsic concept for the rhetoric which constructed the values of the German nation within Hitler's discourse. What was called for was sacrifice on the part of the Aryan people. Stern quotes Hitler:

> So if somebody tells us, 'The future too will demand sacrifices', then we say, 'Yes, indeed it will!' National Socialism is not a doctrine of inertia but a doctrine of conflict. Not a doctrine of happiness or good luck, but a doctrine of work and a doctrine of struggle, and thus also a doctrine of sacrifice.
>
> (23)

Stern's argument in respect of sacrifice is that it belongs within what he calls the 'sacrifice syndrome' (22), an inherently destructive component of the German 'intellectual temper' of the age (19). Stern notes that in German the word *Opfer* carries both the meaning of sacrifice and that of victim, an uncomfortable but striking ambiguity (23). If Hitler calls for sacrifice, he also calls, through a slip in the language, for victims; for Girard, the victim is at the root and beginning of all sacrifices, however they are conducted in a society.

Girard confirms the sedimentation of the relationship between plague and sacrifice by examining how, in times of the former, societies experience a disintegration of the usual differences which keep groups functioning without internecine violence. When differences are effaced, when the rules and norms of society are troubled by epidemics, natural disasters, war or conflict, a 'sacrificial crisis' ensues which needs to find a sacrificial victim through which the community can restore a sense of oppositional unanimity.[22] In other words, unanimity and harmony are re-established through the identification of difference which reinstates, through a complex web of substitutions, differentiation and thus order. Hitler perceived the German nation to be in crisis, a crisis which in his rhetorical pronouncements stemmed from the presence of the Jewish plague in society. Establishing harmony through instilling a unanimous distrust and dislike of the Jews meant that their victimisation and eventual sacrifice became a possibility which had not presented itself for hundreds of years. Once again in history the Jews had been made into

a kind of *pharmakos*. The vocabulary of plague, pestilence and pollution naturally accompanied this undertaking; what Hitler and the Nazis did was nothing new, as Girard has demonstrated, but in fact a re-enactment of a primitive form of scapegoating which Girard, somewhat strangely given the time of his writing, believed had been superseded in modern society by the juridical process.

Girard's analysis confines itself to primitive societies but Jacques Derrida's recent work on what he calls the 'autoimmune force' is pertinent to establishing the role of the *pharmakos* in twentieth-century (and twenty-first-century) political rhetoric, not least because it is a term borrowed from the discourse of disease and its treatment.[23] Autoimmunity is the medico-biological name for when the immune system of an individual starts reacting against his or her tissues in such a way that it causes sickness, disease or even death. Quite simply and, in some cases for science, mysteriously, it is when the body's defences begin to attack the body instead of defending it.[24] In *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason*, Derrida first diagnoses autoimmunity at the heart of democracy, visible in its structural possibility of democratically destroying itself, as when a people vote into power an authoritarian regime which then rescinds the rights, for example of equality, that democracy in principle protects. As Derrida demonstrates, however, it is not only in extreme cases that autoimmunity infects democracy: quite often, in the name of democratic principles and liberties, those self-same liberties and principles are curtailed, just as was seen in the US and the UK after 9/11, with the attrition of civil rights and liberties in the name of homeland security and protection from the 'other', the outsider, the unwelcome. In such a move, democracy 'must thus come to resemble those enemies, to corrupt itself and threaten itself in order to protect itself against their threats' (40). For Derrida, autoimmunity is the name for the always possible unravelling of the social bond, which when it occurs does so at the expense of some 'other' who by this process is exorcised, deprived or prohibited. The autoimmunity in Nazi anti-Semitic discourse is evident in two distinct respects: firstly, the Nazi accusations that Jews are manipulative, power hungry, politically and culturally destructive and concerned to spread their influence and values throughout German society, equally describe Nazi values, behaviour and foreign policy. Thus the Nazis resemble or come to resemble the image of the Jews and Jewish behaviour that they have represented and so decried. In another vein, the enemy which the democratically elected National Socialists created was also intrinsically part of themselves: in the same way as the ancient *pharmakoi*, the Jews were a part of the society which rejected

them; thus, in destroying the Jews German society was also destroying itself in an autoimmune fashion. If the scapegoat figure brings the community together in a mutually shared hatred for a 'single foe', it also splits that community since the foe is chosen from within.[25] This suggests that while the Jewish plague was a rhetorical device deployed to isolate the Jewish community and establish it as the polluted *pharmakos*, the scapegoat that must be eliminated, plague was also absolutely necessary to the project of nation-building and the fostering of national support which the Nazis needed to legitimise themselves. The Nazis 'created' the Jewish plague and disseminated news of its existence, and they did so because they needed it. As Jean-Paul Sartre observes in 1946 'the anti-Semite is in the unhappy position of having a vital need for the very enemy he wishes to destroy'.[26]

The anti-Fascist reinscription of plague

With plague playing such an effective and historically resonant role in Nazi anti-Semitism, it would seem likely that anti-fascist discourse would be at pains to refute the trope. Yet in Wilhelm Reich's *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* (1933), what he calls the 'emotional plague' is proposed as an explanation for Nazi ideology and its acceptance by the German people.[27] In this way, *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*, like many other social and political explanations, turns to the metaphor of sickness: the people are sick which is why they accept 'sick' Nazism. Reich's position is an interesting one: a Jew from a German-speaking family, he was at one time both a psychoanalyst and a member of the Communist Party. As a young man, he studied in Vienna where, in 1919, he matriculated from the Law Faculty, began his medical studies and met Sigmund Freud.[28] The father of psychoanalysis must have been impressed by this new acquaintance since, several months after their initial meeting, he began sending him patients (W85).[29] Within a year, Reich had become a fully fledged member of the Psycho-Analytic Society in Vienna and was sufficiently well thought of to be invited to join the weekly and exclusive meetings of the Society's inner circle that gathered every Wednesday evening at Freud's house (W85, R88), a privilege that many in the Society never enjoyed. Reich boasted in 1952 that Freud had told a friend of Anna, his daughter, that the newcomer was the 'best head in the Association' (R50). Yet this seemingly brilliant and successful young man only merits three extremely short entries in Ernest Jones's three-volume biography of Freud and his work.[30] The reason for this occlusion is not merely that, like many of Freud's disciples, the relationship ended

in a substantial and irrevocable rift; others to whom this happened were dealt with more expansively by Jones. The explanation is probably two-fold: Reich was the youngest of the inner circle and, according to him, disapproved of by the old guard (W103, R51). Secondly, the trajectory of his later work, his 'discovery' and advocacy of 'orgone energy', was something that Jones, publishing the biography in 1953–7, would in all likelihood have wanted to distance psychoanalysis from as much as possible.[31] In fact, Reich's attempts to sunder Marxism with an exclusive focus on psychoanalysis's ideas of libido and sexuality, with no consideration of the death instincts which were increasingly occupying Freud, meant he was clearly diverging from the interests and teachings of the Association. With a high proportion of Jewish analysts and members, it is also possible to see that psychoanalysis would wish to avoid drawing the fire of the newly ascendant National Socialist Movement, which, as we have seen, aligned Marxism with its loathing for Jewishness (R103). Given the *Anschluß* was to come, Reich's exclusion was in all probability a wise decision.

Reich's *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* is an attempt to theorise the German population's acquiescence to fascism; like the plays of Camus and Čapek discussed in Chapter 2, Reich is interested in and disturbed by the complacency of people towards the regime under which they live. Plague, pestilence and the language of contagion and contamination are used to label fascism throughout the book and its lengthy preface: Germany is suffering from a 'fascist plague' (333, 334, 342), an 'emotional plague of politics' (264); the masses are 'mystically contaminated' with fascism (191); it is because of the 'plague of irrationalism' that the masses support Hitler (220); and this 'political irrationalism' is what 'plagues, disfigures, and destroys our social life' (312). Such pronouncements recall those of Hitler against the Jews. The 'emotional plague' is the most prominent of Reich's deployment of disease vocabulary and functions as another name for the irrationalism which he sees as the precondition for the acceptance of fascist dictatorship and Nazi policies. In this respect, Reich's analysis of fascism is a social critique: it is not fascists alone who are responsible for their policies and attitudes but the psychic structure of 'sick' man which allows him or her to accept and support sick politics:

> With his [man's] biological stiffening and the loss of his native function of self-regulation, he acquired all the characterological attitudes, which culminated in the outbreak of the dictatorial plague: a hierarchical view of the state, a mechanical administration of society,

> fear of responsibility, an intense longing for a führer and a craving for authority, insistence upon commands, mechanistic thinking in natural science, mechanical killing in war.
>
> (342)

A blurring of medical and metaphorical references to the body operates throughout, reappropriating and subverting Hitler's rhetoric which functioned in the same way. Reich argues that it is in the psychological and sociological condition of the population that the seeds of fascism lie, and hence he dispenses with the view that fascism was thrust upon the public against their will.

Reich is well aware of the central importance of the language of contagion for fascist and anti-Semitic rhetoric: in the chapter 'Race Theory' he examines Hitler's accusation that the Jews spread syphilis and Marxism, quoting passages of *Mein Kampf* that refer to the 'Jewish plague' and 'Jewification' (81). He notes the link Hitler makes between contagion, Jewishness and Marxism, commenting that it 'is remarkable how closely this theory of blood poisoning is related to the political thesis of the poisoning of Teutonism by the "world Jew, Karl Marx"' (82). *The Mass Psychology* sees anti-Semitism as an intrinsic component of Nazi ideology and the book's reinscription of plague rhetoric is a conscious manoeuvre to displace emphasis: Jews are not the plague; the plague is what enables people to think of Jews in such a way. The emotional plague and the irrationalism it carries are, in Reich's symptomology, an essential part of human nature that we all suffer:

> If 'human nature,' which is conceived of as immutable, is identical with the emotional plague, and if, in turn, the emotional plague is identical with the sum total of all irrational functions of life in the human animal; if, moreover, the functions of work, in themselves and independent of man, are rational, then we are confronted with two enormous fields of human activity, which are mortally opposed to one another: vitally necessary work as the rational function of life on the one hand and the emotional plague as the irrational function of life on the other hand.
>
> (374)

In the dichotomy outlined above can be seen the aspects of Marxism that Reich retains in the positive emphasis on the role of work that is fulfilling. Reich's 'cure' for the emotional plague is indebted to the importance he places upon the libido, which he became interested

in through his contact with psychoanalysis. The emotional plague is the state of unfreedom wherein people accept the irrational mystification that political rhetoric produces. Fundamentally for Reich, freedom is innate and can be achieved; the path to gaining it is through the abolition of 'the social suppression of genital sexuality' which a patriarchal structure imposes upon people's lives (218); removing this will ensure that, '[t]he road is clear for society to master all the social conditions we call the "emotional plague"' (219). Fascism is inherently irrational because, unlike the 'work-democracy' which Reich advocates, it does not pay attention to 'the natural process of love, work, and knowledge' (311).

The weaknesses in Reich's account are clear: despite its analysis of fascism in the milieu of the 1930s, it is ahistorical insofar as it eschews any examination of the political, philosophical and historical conditions of the time; he similarly fails to explain why every patriarchal structure does not inevitably produce fascism. His confidence in the freedom to be gained across the diverse fields of politics, society and work by the removal of social taboos surrounding sexuality and sexual behaviour is reductive, idealist and overly optimistic. Additionally, his 'discovery' of orgone energy, which he believed to be a scientifically proven basic life source, has been treated at best with scepticism, at worst with outright ridicule. Nevertheless, his critique of authoritarian societal structures and fascist rhetoric and values was one of the earliest and stands as an unequivocal condemnation not just of fascism but of the people who accepted and followed it.

Sick thinking

Plague is a powerful curse for the anti-fascist and the anti-Semite alike. The philosopher Alphonso Lingis calls such words 'value-terms': words or phrases which are used in potent ways to label. Value-terms are not fixed in meaning and are commonly used in 'exclamatory speech acts'.[32] Like modern versions of curses or magical incantations, they carry great and influential power for good or for evil. Speaking of those deployed for evil, Lingis observes that 'they spread by contagion and spread contagion' (61). Once again a medical vocabulary metaphorically describes the way words and phrases carry meaning; the body metaphor is implicit in Lingis's claim that a value-term 'infects the language' and 'is picked up like a virus' (61). Lingis rightly sees these terms as a way of exerting political power: they can caricature and characterise; they can be used to exclude or denigrate an opponent.

He refers to the example of how, '[w]hen President Ronald Regan identified President Daniel Ortega Saavedra [of Nicaragua] as a "two-bit dictator in designer glasses," he spread an old man's rancorous castrating hatred of a young revolutionary to millions, confirming them in their belligerent ignorance' (61–2). For Lingus, words have great formative and transformative power; the extent of this can be demonstrated by an example like plague, which already comes with an established legacy of anti-Semitic denigration, easily revivified and mobilised. Placing Reich's and Hitler's plague usage alongside one another highlights how plague has a diseaselike motility within language. As with value-terms, this results in an attendant conceptual agility: plague is capable of moving across discourses, of mutating to name different 'problems' depending upon the perspective of the writer. It can even name both sides of the debate, not 'belonging' to either exposition. Hence a fascist calls Jews a plague and a Jew believes the plague is fascism. As Mercutio's dying words in *Romeo and Juliet* curse the two warring families whose feud cause his fatality: '[a] plague on both your houses'.[33]

Sick thinking and the sickness of reason has occupied philosophy since well before the twentieth-century fascism Reich is analysing: there is a legacy of European thinkers who have drawn upon the vocabulary of sickness to name or to criticise the dominant thinking of their day, including Søren Kierkegaard in *The Sickness Unto Death* and Friedrich Nietzsche's complaints about sick morality in *The Genealogy of Morals*.[34] These thinkers are joined in the twentieth century by Theodor Adorno's identification in *Minima Moralia* of the 'sick' reason masquerading as 'common sense' propagated by the 'ruling universal order'.[35] Derrida's concept of autoimmunity resides within this tradition; following Edmund Husserl, who was critiquing the same irrationalism and fascism as Reich, Derrida elaborates upon Husserl's opinion that Europe is sick by identifying this as 'a sickness of reason', an irrationality within reason which betrays its autoimmune logic (124). Derrida, as Adorno did before him, warns that we 'must sometimes, in the name of reason, be suspicious of rationalizations' (157). Not everything that appears rational actually is so; reason can play host to irrationality as its autoimmune and destructive other, just as the conscious and the unconscious, the pleasure principle and the death drive, inhabit the same human subject. Derrida names this the 'poisoned medicine, this *pharmakon* of an inflexible and cruel autoimmunity' (157). *Pharmakon*, the key signifier Derrida traces in Plato's *Phaedrus*, is the drug, poison and cure; it is possible to add to this another set of similar genealogies, including the body which harbours the ability to fight off sickness and

to turn upon itself with sickening self-destructivity.[36] Closely related, etymologically, semantically and homophonically to the *pharmakon* is the *pharmakos*, which shares an ambivalence in role and status, at once riddled with the pollution of plague and simultaneously the active cure for it. It is exile or, in its more extreme form, blood that is called for in the ritual of the *pharmakos*; this is the 'cure' that Nazi rhetoric proposed for the 'plaguey' Jews in relation to the 'healthy' German body politic. The traces of autoimmunity and the death drive, which Derrida notes within rationality and the *pharmakon*, are also present in anti-Semitism and, indeed, any discourse which operates in a similar way to exclude a particular group from society, to make them carry the blame for that society's failings, for its metaphorical sickness. Plague is always close to the death drive: embodied in classical art as a figure or horseman carrying a bow and arrow, it is a swift and merciless hunter; used as a rhetorical slur, it had its role in the stigmatisation which facilitated the Holocaust. As Defoe writes, with perhaps more prescience than he realised: '[p]lague is a formidable Enemy, and is arm'd with Terrors that every Man is not sufficiently fortified to resist, or prepar'd to stand the Shock against'.[37]

If something as reasonable as reason can suffer autoimmunity, then it is of no surprise to find that fascist anti-Semitic discourse can do so too, nor that Reich fails to be immune to the irrationality of the emotional plague he describes. After the *Mass Psychology*, the 'emotional plague' played an increasing role in Reich's work but, where it began by naming a state of mind and structure of society which locks people into unfreedom and thus creates support for an oppressive fascist regime, it unfortunately went on to develop into a general term of abuse for those by whom Reich felt persecuted. Eventually, it became a catch-all category for people Reich deemed 'sick' because of their lack of belief in his work and theories. More often than not, Reich's 'enemies' were the men whom he thought had sabotaged his relationship with Freud and therefore prepared the way for his excommunication from the Association (R55, R99, R103).

Plague's conceptual motility is confirmed in the ease with which Reich can use it to cover both the anti-Semitic irrationality of fascists and the behaviour of Jewish psychoanalysts. This constitutes a crucial move in the progressive spread of plague as a means of stigmatising an enemy at such an historical juncture: the disease which Hitler had associated with the Jews, taken over in turn by Reich – a Jew and psychoanalyst – to name fascism, gets turned upon a predominantly Jewish science. In *Reich Speaks of Freud*, a collection of interviews conducted in 1952 with

Dr Eissler and various letters and excerpts from Reich's work relating to the psychoanalytic movement and his involvement in it, plague is mobilised to name the 'sickness' of his detractors and critics; the first accused is of a 'pestilent character', a person who is 'emotionally sick' and begins to 'stir up trouble' through 'slander' (R24). This is Paul Federn, who joined Freud's circle in 1903 and remained one its longest-standing members, even up until the flight from Vienna precipitated by the Nazis (R310). When Freud was struck by cancer in 1923, Federn was appointed vice-president and became, according to Paul Roazen, his 'personal substitute'.[38] Significantly, Reich was analysed by Federn, but the younger man broke the sessions off, as he was to do with all three attempts at his training analysis. In the interviews with Eissler, Reich complained that Federn had worked to undermine his relationship with Freud and claimed that he had denied the 'development from symptom analysis [as practised by psychoanalysis] to character analysis and orgone therapy [as practised by Reich]' (R24).[39] This could hardly have been unexpected since Federn was known for his loyalty and strict adherence to Freud's work, the tenants of which Reich's theories were rapidly moving away from. In a section of *Character Analysis* collected with the interviews, Reich accuses another psychoanalyst in the Freud circle, Otto Fenichel, of being a 'rumour-monger', and of exhibiting behaviour 'according to the specific pattern of the emotional plague' (R197–8).[40] Reich believed Fenichel was responsible for the rumour that he had been suffering from schizophrenia. The circulatory contagion common to plague has a shared conceptual structure with rumour and gossip; both spread person to person, both are destructive from the point of view of the one being slandered or infected. For Reich, rumour-spreading becomes another additional symptom of the emotional plague. Accordingly, similar charges of plague behaviour were levelled at a Dr Miller, supposedly responsible for the rumour that a woman at Reich's orgone centre in the US had been masturbated in the course of her treatment (R196).

Psychoanalysis and 'The Great Incurable Malady'

Reich's use of plague to label Jewish psychoanalysts demonstrates how plague's rhetorical deployment has a tendency to slip from one phenomenon to another even within the same oeuvre; once again, plague is used to negatively describe Jews, even though Reich's accusations do not touch on matters of race. Once used specifically to designate the psychology of people accepting of fascism, the term 'emotional plague'

grows more capacious in Reich's work and thinking, as though it has overtaken his own ability to control or use it with critical sensibility. His appreciation of its power to label and stigmatise the Jews disappears in his own use of it to denigrate his former Jewish colleagues. At its inception, psychoanalysis attracted a high number of Jews to its ranks and near the end of his life Freud dedicated a monograph, *Moses and Monotheism*, to discussing Jewish heritage. Given the close affinity between plague and psychoanalysis already established in earlier chapters – from Oedipus through to the infectiousness of psychoanalytic structures and the plaguing of dreams – the way in which the new 'Jewish science' negotiates its Jewish constitution within the growing atmosphere of anti-Semitism produces a proliferation of plague mobilisations which is by now to be expected.

Freud was anxious to gain scientific support for psychoanalysis from outside the Jewish community. When Carl Gustav Jung, a Swiss non-Jew who was fairly new to psychoanalysis, was suggested as president at the Second International Psycho-Analytic Congress at Nuremberg in 1910, a protest meeting was held. As recounted by Fritz Wittels in his biography of Freud, the father of psychoanalysis addressed his fellow analysts and their concerns as follows:

> 'Most of you are Jews, and therefore you are incompetent to win new friends for the new teaching. Jews must be content with the modest role of preparing the ground. It is absolutely essential that I should form ties in the world of general science. I am getting on in years, and am weary of being perpetually attacked. We are all in danger.' Seizing his coat by the lapels, he [Freud] said, 'They won't even leave me a coat to my back. The Swiss will save us – will save me, and all of you as well.'[41]

Winning friends for the 'new teaching' and 'preparing the ground' borrows the language of early Christian evangelism, which sought to distance itself from its Jewish origins; here, it is a gentile who is to be the saviour, specifically because of his status as a non-Jew and his standing in the scientific community, the approval of which psychoanalysis needed if it was to gain an international reputation. Even at this early point, Freud was anxious that psychoanalysis did not become a 'Jewish national affair', as he was to express it in a much later 1926 letter to Karl Abraham; instead he wanted it to establish itself within the wider community: medical, psychological and non-Jewish.[42] Freud feared that his Jewishness had contributed to 'provoking the antipathy of his

environment to psychoanalysis', as he wrote in the 1925 paper, 'The Resistances to Psychoanalysis'; Jung was to offset this.[43] Yet Jung was not to be the Swiss saviour after all. The vicissitudes of his relationship with Freud have been detailed elsewhere, but after the break, Jung makes a specific reference to psychoanalysis and Jewishness in an article entitled 'The State of Psychotherapy Today' (1934):[44]

> The Jew, who is something of a nomad, has never yet created a cultural form of his own and as far as we can see never will, since all his instincts and talents require a more or less civilised nation to act as host to their development.
>
> The Jewish race as a whole – at least this is my experience – possesses an unconscious which can be compared with the 'Aryan' only with reserve.... Because of this the most precious secret of the Germanic peoples – their creative and intuitive depth of soul – has been explained by a morass of banal infantilism, while my own warning voice has for decades been suspected of anti-Semitism. This suspicion emanated from Freud. He did not understand the Germanic psyche any more than did his Germanic followers. Has the formidable phenomenon of National Socialism, on which the whole world gazes with astonished eyes, taught them better?[45]

The imputation is transparent: Freud cannot understand the German psyche because he is Jewish; his followers because they accept the teachings of the 'Jewish' psychoanalysis. The echo of Hitler's accusations in *Mein Kampf* and those expressed in *Der ewige Jude* are resonant in the lines drawn between racial qualities and in the accusation that Jews feed upon their 'host' country. Coupled with the inference of Jewish parasitism is the charge levelled at Freud of rumour-mongering, a behaviour included in Reich's later typology of 'the emotional plague'.

A footnote in *Moses and Monotheism* (1939), Freud's publication which specifically and at length addresses Jewish history and heritage, is one of a series of occasions on which Freud refers to plague in relation to Jewishness and anti-Semitism.[46] This footnote asks: 'And incidentally, who suggested to the Jewish poet Heine in the nineteenth century AD that he should complain of his religion as "the plague dragged along from the Nile valley, the unhealthy beliefs of Ancient Egypt"?' (30–1). In *Moses and Monotheism* Freud is not interested in plague and does nothing to refute a trope which equates the disease with Judaism; instead he wishes to draw attention to Heine's assumption that Jews had appropriated certain Egyptian beliefs and customs. Nonetheless, the

Heine poem, written as its title explains to commemorate, 'The New Israelite Hospital in Hamburg', forcibly portrays Judaism as a sickness, an affliction and a pestilence. It closes by commending the Jew who set up the hospital and imagines him lamenting Jewishness, 'the great incurable malady of his brothers' [*der unheilbar großen Brüderkrankheit*].[47] The poem's opening, from where Freud lifts his quotation, unequivocally grafts physical sickness and pestilence onto the 'malady' of Jewishness:

> A hospital for sick and needy Jews,
> For those poor mortals who are trebly wretched,
> With three great evil maladies afflicted;
> With poverty and pain and Jewishness.
> The worst of these three evils is the last one,
> The thousand-year-old family affliction,
> The plague they carried from the grim Nile valley,
> The old Egyptian faith so long unhealthful.
>
> (398–9)

> *Ein Hospital für arme, kranke Juden,*
> *Für Menschenkinder, welche dreifach elend,*
> *Behaftet mit den bösen drei Gebresten,*
> *Mit Armut, Körperschmerz und Judentume!*
>
> *Das schlimmste von den dreien ist das letzte,*
> *Das tausendjährige Familienübel,*
> *Die aus dem Niltal mitgeschleppte Plage,*
> *Der altägyptisch ungesunde Glauden.*
>
> (288)

Little did Heine realise how powerfully against the Jewish people plague would be used, whereas Freud, by the time this section of *Moses and Monotheism* was published in 1937, must have been all too aware.

That Freud was acquainted with the comparison of Jewishness to pestilential sickness is clear from his knowledge of the Heine poem. In fact, he used plague to curse the fascists in a letter to his son, Ernst, written immediately following the Socialist Uprising in Austria in February 1934. After describing the street shooting, the misinformation and the blackout of the few days of 'civil war' through which they had lived, Freud comments:

> The future is uncertain: either Austrian fascism or the swastika. In the latter event we shall have to leave; native fascism we are willing

> to take in our stride up to a certain point; it can hardly treat us as badly as its German cousin.... Our attitude to the two political possibilities for Austria's future can only be summed up in Mercutio's line in *Romeo and Juliet*:
>
> *A plague on both your houses*.[48]

Mercutio, friend of Romeo, dies by sleight of Capulet hand, defending the Montague name. While dying he curses three times: 'A plague a' both houses', '[a] plague a' both your houses', and again, '[a] plague a' both your houses'.[49] Related to the Prince, Mercutio is involved in the feud between the two families through his friendship with Romeo, not through blood: he is the outsider who is needlessly sacrificed. By calling up this Shakespearian curse Freud implies he is outside the controversy raging in Austrian politics, able from a position of safety to bestow plague upon home-grown and foreign fascism alike. Yet his safety as a Jew is imperilled from both directions, as he recognises. No one is outside plague's reach, least of all a Jew alive during the 1930s in Germany or Austria.

Chapter 2 saw how plague in Shakespeare's plays is often used to curse. Freud made use of this powerful property of plague in response to anti-Semitism, delivering a Shakespearian curse through word of mouth at the end of the 1920s. In his book tracing Freud's relationship with his Jewishness, Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi notes that in 1929 a certain 'German-American', Charles Maylan, published the first attempt to analyse Freud through psychoanalytic terminology.[50] It was entitled *Freuds tragischer Komplex: Eine Analyse der Psychoanalyse* [*Freud's Tragic Complex: An Analysis of Psychoanalysis*]. Maylan endeavoured to analyse Freud through the dreams in *Die Traumdeutung* and concludes, as Yerushalmi summarises, that:

> [a]t the root of the shortcomings and perversions of psychoanalysis lie those of its founder, and these include not only his unresolved neuroses, but his Jewish character. The book [*Freud's Tragic Complex*] is therefore also spiced with anti-Semitic allusions, phraseology, and judgements.
>
> (58)

Jung, it transpires, had contributed a favourable blurb for the book which was displayed on a publicity poster advertising a lecture by Maylan. Accusing psychoanalysis of stemming from 'the centuries-old

torture, humiliation, and thirst for revenge of an ungenial race', believing that since Freud was a Jew he was 'deeply rooted in faith and superstition', Maylan's book was very much in keeping with the dominant rhetoric of the times (58). Freud, who was aware of the book even if he had not read it, responded with a quotation from Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, delivered to Maylan through the psychoanalyst Max Eitingon. The words are Caliban's: 'You taught me language; and my profit on't is, I know how to curse' (59). Although not quoted by Freud, the line, as he must have known, continues: 'The red-plague rid you / For learning me your language!'[51] Freud had bequeathed to the world the language of psychoanalysis, which he recognises in Maylan's book had been turned against him and against his Jewishness in the form of a curse, as plague. Yet the citation is ambivalent insofar as by quoting directly from *The Tempest* the pronouns invert the relationship: Maylan has taught Freud a language, the language of a twisted psychoanalysis, with which to curse; the return from Freud, the profit, is the curse of plague. Either way, the language of psychoanalysis, the terminology upon which the edifice of ideas is structured, enables the curse of plague to descend upon the other, be it the anti-Semite cursing the Jew or the Jew cursing the anti-Semite. In the letter to his son and the riposte to Maylan, Freud's use of plague lifts it from the prevailing, but negative, contemporary association with Jewishness, while at the same time still acknowledging that association by inverting the employment of plague from its role of naming the Jews to instead naming the anti-Semite.

Another reading of Caliban's words, upon the wider stage of 1930s anti-Semitic uses of plague, would be to see them as a reclamation of the language of pestilence. From this position the Jew has been taught and told that he is a plague; but with the knowledge of this rhetoric comes the ability to adopt it and recast it back as a curse. Plague in political discourse is this point of autoimmunity: the moment where the other is attacked and expropriated to maintain the purity of a (mythical) whole, and yet, simultaneously, the moment at which a breach is opened in such a deployment, destroying the cohesion of the analogy and the rhetorical totality of such a gesture. On the one hand, incorporating plague into anti-Semitic persuasion carries the economic advantage of drawing upon an existing associative legacy, which in itself made use of the much older scapegoat mechanism of the *pharmakos*. The psychological fear of contagious disease, its personal as well as public invasive infectiousness and its adjectival possibilities make it a suitable vector for prejudice. On the other hand, as we have seen with Reich and the

discourses of psychoanalysis, it is not a stable carrier for anti-Semitism but instead constantly open to remobilisation and reinscription. Its power lies in its contagious possibilities and multiple associations and also in its ability to move from one body of discourse to another, even if the move inverts the initial rhetorical investment. This means that plague, Freud's own sobriquet for psychoanalysis, is recast back by him as a curse: it labels the fascists and the anti-Semitic attacker of psychoanalysis and Freud's own Jewishness. As a trope of crisis and exaggeration the appearance of plague in the 1930s debates about anti-Semitism was unlikely to be the last time it resurfaced; the euphemism 'gay plague' for AIDS is yet another mobilisation of pestilence to name and stigmatise a minority group, and it is not the last: recently, the worrying neologism 'Islamofascism' has been designated a plague.[52] Plague remains a powerful political and rhetorical tool.

6

Screening Plague Images/Plaguing Screen Images: von Trier's *Epidemic* and Hypnosis

In the 1980s the world was gradually being alerted to the spreading AIDS virus; infection was high on the list of concerns. In 1988 Lars von Trier, the Danish film-maker who would become famous for his Dogme 95 movie-makers manifesto and for films such as *Breaking the Waves* (1996), *Dancer in the Dark* (2000) and *Dogville* (2003), made an experimental and self-referential film about plague called *Epidemic*. AIDS is not mentioned in any way, but growing international anxiety about this new infectious disease is the context for the film, as the writers admit in the voice-over to the DVD version. Despite this, *Epidemic* is primarily notable for a very different reason: its portrayal of the interaction between plague and screen images brings into startling coalescence the question of affect upon cinema spectators, especially spectators confronted with plague, and the role of hypnosis and suggestion within that experience. Even though the gaze is important to film theorists, hypnosis and related phenomena such as suggestion and fascination have been largely forgotten and left to languish among the initial, supposedly naïve responses to film as a new art form. Identification is a key concept for film theory; Sigmund Freud's work makes a link between identification and hypnosis; but, again, this is not remarked upon much in recent writing. Von Trier's film explicitly returns to hypnosis, its strange possibilities and its relationship with film, and his work has prompted several critics to re-examine the role of hypnosis in the cinematic experience.

Epidemic is a movie about making a movie about plague. It is the second in a trilogy which repeatedly evokes the observations of early film theorists that cinema can have a hypnotic effect upon its audience. In particular, the film's final scene of hypnosis is provocative; not only does it make relevant much earlier discussions about the potential

power and nature of the cinematic experience, it also helps reorientate, albeit temporarily, the lens of psychoanalytic film analysis away from its Lacanian influence, back to Freud and, specifically, his discussion of the infectiousness of hypnosis, suggestion and crowd behaviour in *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (1921). Within *Epidemic*, hypnosis serves as a vector through which plague infection can travel. Plague is shown to call forth an imaginative response, both from the scriptwriters and from the way in which the hypnotised subject of the film responds to the disease.

There is little critical material and comment in English upon *Epidemic*, perhaps because it is one of von Trier's first full-length films in an oeuvre which developed to become increasingly controversial. The small amount available is confined to the overview of von Trier's work provided in his biography, various interviews and passing references in discussions primarily concerned with his other films.[1] For example, Elizabeth Stewart in 'Hypnosis, Identification and Crime in Lars von Trier's European Trilogy', a rare essay actually dedicated to the trilogy of which *Epidemic* is a part, specifically excludes this film from her discussion even though it contains the ingredients of hypnosis, identification and an interest in the effects of European fascism which she focuses upon in the other films.[2] Of the trilogy, *Epidemic* is the loosest: it lacks the professional finish of the *The Element of Crime* (1984) or *Europa* (1991); much of the dialogue appears improvised, the acting unrehearsed and the majority of the camera work is hand held.

Epidemic begins with the loss of a movie script through a computer mishap. Lars von Trier and Niels Vørsel, the two writers who play 'themselves' in the film, have five days in which to rewrite the screenplay. Instead, they abandon the original project, entitled 'The Cop and the Whore', and as the title of their new film, 'Epidemic', appears on the typewriter page, it is simultaneously imprinted in red onto the top left-hand corner of the screen, there to stain throughout. The film they will write is to be about plague. *Epidemic* follows von Trier and Vørsel as they discuss and write the script and as they visit a library, a hospital and the city of Cologne in their research. At various points the viewer is presented with a scene from this developing film 'Epidemic', yet at the close of the fifth day, when the consultant from the Danish Film Institute, Claes Kastholm Hansen, comes to dinner, the writers have only 12 pages of script to give him: in other words, the film has not been shot, only written. Thus the sections from 'Epidemic' function in relation to the outer film story as though they were the imaginative realisation of the typed words from the script-in-progress.

Hence perhaps, the reason why von Trier is also the central protagonist of 'Epidemic': as Freud observes, the ego is the hero of every story we read.[3] These scenes from the script always follow a suggestion for a character or event from the writers or are prompted by a piece of research they have undertaken. For example, on the drive to Germany von Trier and Vørsel discuss how some victims were erroneously buried alive during the Black Death. They decide to reflect this in the film using the character of the nurse; just as this decision is made, they drive down into an underground motorway tunnel which blends into darkness and then the viewer sees the scene of the nurse buried and trapped in a coffin, feverishly trying to attract attention by banging on the lid above her head. As they imaginatively create the film, the viewer intermittently sees the result.

There are two plagues in *Epidemic*, one raging within the script under construction and another, more stealthily, beginning to show its effects as the two writers conduct their research. In the film-within-a-film, 'Epidemic', plague has broken out and is threatening to destroy the inhabitants of a city. Von Trier is drawing upon an existing legacy of plagued cities, from Sophocles' Thebes to Camus's Oran. There is a scene in which the information about the city's plague outbreak is conveyed by the rest of the medical community to one of their number, Dr Mesmer. His name is an obvious allusion to Franz Anton Mesmer, the man responsible for introducing mesmerism, the precursor of hypnosis, to a credulous France in the eighteenth century. The Mesmer of 'Epidemic', having heard the prognosis of his colleagues, is intent upon leaving the city walls to treat what he imagines are the suffering sick cut off from medical care in the surrounding countryside. He follows this desire to help others even though the other medical men disagree. Meanwhile, plague is also breaking out in the 'real' world in which the scriptwriters are working: a voice-over tells us that people are complaining of mysterious neckaches; we see von Trier constantly drinking Alka Seltzer; Vørsel goes into hospital to have some 'small growths' removed from his neck; while visiting him, von Trier, as part of their research, watches an autopsy on a corpse which, the pathologist explains, has two highly unusual 'granula' on his neck glands, one of the places where plague buboes form. The writers, however, remain apparently unaware of the mounting signs of plague in the environments around them, so engrossed are they in a plague of their own creation. That is, until the final moments of the film.

The scene which closes *Epidemic* is the most intense of the movie, achieving its effects through all the usual tools of lighting, camera

work and soundtrack, but most powerfully through the response of the hypnotised subject, Gitte, to the dramatic instruction: 'You have read the words. Enter the film. Enter "Epidemic"!' Gitte and her hypnotist have been invited to a dinner party as part of a ruse to demonstrate to the sceptical producer, Kastholm Hansen, the worth of the script of 'Epidemic', which Gitte had been given to read before her arrival. In reply to a question from the hypnotist, the hypnotised Gitte describes scenes of screaming, streets filled with people who look terrible and avoid one another for fear of infection and rats with huge tails. As the psychic spectator of this film-to-be, responding to an array of images which affect her but have been conjured up for her by the suggestions within the film script, Gitte is in an almost analogous position to that of the cinema spectators watching *Epidemic*, who themselves are subjected to suggestive images which are not their own. Hypnosis and suggestion have long been considered to go hand in hand, since it is through suggestion ('Enter the film') that the hypnotist guides their subject.[4] Thus the cinema audience, too, watch (Gitte's) traumatised tears and screaming; they too witness an outbreak of plague. Caroline Bainbridge has noted of the whole *Europa* trilogy that 'von Trier's use of hypnosis as a mode of alerting the spectator to the importance of the cultural traumas this work explores raises interesting issues of cinematic address'.[5] She adds, in specific response to *Epidemic*, that the film 'arguably prompts a measure of self-reflexivity in the spectator watching the narratives unfold – has s/he also become contaminated as a result of watching the [entwined] films?' (356). As Gitte describes the images that only she can see, though her eyes are closed, she speaks haltingly and with obvious and deepening distress. She says of the people: '[t]hey're in terrible pain. It … it hurts me.' This is the first intimation that the plague Gitte is witnessing under hypnosis, the epidemic of the 'film-world' to which she has gained psychic access, is transmissible, at least in its effects, to an outsider, a spectator. Plague in the film-worlds, those of 'Epidemic' and *Epidemic*, terrifies, disfigures and kills.

These two film-worlds remain discrete, as indicated by the use of a different type of film for the sections of 'Epidemic': for the movie-within-a-movie, the cameraman uses 16mm film, which provides clearer images and is shot through a slightly greenish filter, producing camera work that is more stylised, more precise and more artistic. The outer film is black and white, and often grainy, shifting in and out of focus fairly frequently as though it were a home movie. Yet in the hypnosis scene, for the first time, we are presented with the events of the outer story through the filter and camera reserved for the 'Epidemic' scenes.

This sudden and brief change occurs at the moment the hypnotist asks whether they can begin: the film immediately alters and we are given a long shot of the hypnotist and his subject down the dining table, with the camera focusing on them. This is accompanied by strains of recognisably typical horror music, rising in tone, and then the film is swiftly switched back to that used for the outer story of *Epidemic*. The employment of these two types of film to depict the same scene marks the point where the two stories of plague finally and irreversibly conjoin: until that moment there have been hints that there is an epidemic in the outer story, but hints and clues they have remained, mostly subservient to the sense of realism in the mainframe film imbued by the hand-held camera work, the occasionally jerky or out of focus shots, the grainy quality and the looseness of the dialogue.

Throughout the hypnosis, Gitte shows increasing signs of discomfort and suffering: her breathing becomes heavy and stertorous, she begins to cry, to gasp and to moan in between her descriptions of plague-ravaged scenes and people. Eventually she shouts out despairingly in English: 'We all fall down. We all fall down'. These are the last words she speaks; from that point on she only howls, her hands clasping her neck, or she screams and shakes. The whole, extended scene is powerfully disturbing. Gitte is as though possessed and, in a sense, she is: possessed by the film-script, tormented by the images to which she is being subjected. After her last words, a very long take begins during which Gitte has what can be described as a long hysterical fit. At the beginning of the shot her face is obscured by her hands but when she moves them away buboes and lesions are revealed upon her neck: under hypnosis, immersed in the film-world, she has caught plague and brought it back with her into the dining room. In response to her screaming and shaking, the hypnotist attempts to relax her, telling her she is leaving the film. Although there is a diminution in her cries, when she takes her hands from her now open eyes, they are glazed and she seems not to have heard: she looks, but looks as though she does not see the people around her; still, and with mounting passion, she cries and screams, shakes and clutches her face. She spontaneously rises from her chair, still screaming, and moves to a wall against which she leans, crouches and straightens. Then, quite suddenly, she runs towards the dining table and launches herself onto it, into a crouching position. All this time the camera is following her movements in one continuous, extended take. The length of the shot and the aural and visual impact of a woman so clearly in acute emotional anguish, even shock, are what imbue the scene with such startling dramatic tension

and traumatic intensity. At the end of this sequence, Gitte raises herself up to a kneeling position on the table and throws back her head, revealing, centre-shot, the gruesome buboes that have broken out in a string down her neck.

Gitte has become one of the infected screaming people she had reported having seen moments before. The scene shows plague infection capable of being released from film(-images) to spectator, or from one fictional, imaginative, filmic scene ('Epidemic') to another filmic scene (*Epidemic*), through the vector of a hypnotised subject. The danger of 'entering' 'Epidemic', of seeing its images, is catching the plague within; this can also suggestively extend to the encasing film, *Epidemic*, and its effect upon the cinematic viewer, as Bainbridge notes. The hypnosis scene is perturbing and complex. Gitte is not entirely responsible for the plague's arrival in the dining room: Vørsel has already been treated for small neck growths, similar by implication to the ones removed from the corpse von Trier observed being dissected.[6] In fact, the film insinuates that as Gitte is describing the images she sees, similar events are breaking out in the 'real' world of *Epidemic*, for when she speaks of people 'across the street' who are sick, the camera zooms through a window to show a figure discernible in the illuminated house opposite. A little later, when she describes how people lie sick and dying in the streets, the shot cuts through the window to the street below. On the ground a figure lies beside a car; another car draws up, and the driver gets out to inspect the body. Just before Gitte's final words, the camera cuts to a close-up of a hand holding a wine glass. As the shot pans up the wrist, a bubo and lesion are visible beside the watch strap, later revealed to be on the arm of Vørsel. Thus, as 'Epidemic' plays itself out in Gitte's hypnotised imagination, the plague she is describing seems to be simultaneously making its effects felt upon her audience and even those beyond the dining room. Her final cries, indeed, do not describe what she is seeing, but employ a collective pronoun ('we all fall down'), delivering a prophetic warning of what is to come. By the conclusion of the scene, the end of the film, Vørsel's arm is covered in buboes; his partner vomits blood all over the walls and collapses; von Trier crumples, with blood dripping down his forehead: the only two who appear uninfected are the hypnotist and the film producer. These events are somewhat absurd and slapstick, given that they follow the intensity of Gitte's plagued screaming and her hysterical, dramatic leap on to the table. The film's final shot is of von Trier looking upwards, much as his character Dr Mesmer does in the final scene of 'Epidemic', when he seeks redemption for accidentally spreading the plague into the

countryside while trying to cure it. The film writers, in making plague their subject, become subject to plague.

In reality, von Trier and Vørsel had, sometime before, lost a script for a film that was going to be entitled *Mal*: the title given to this lost film in *Epidemic* is 'The Cop and the Whore', which is one way of describing the main characters in von Trier's previous film, and first in the *Europa* trilogy, *Element of Crime*.[7] As already noted, the whole *Europa* trilogy makes explicit and consistent reference to hypnosis. *Element of Crime* opens with the protagonist being hypnotised in Egypt; the story that unfolds is recounted from within his hypnotic state, with occasional prompting voice-overs from the hypnotist. The ending presents an apocalyptic vision of Europe; the protagonist, in the final words of the film, asks of the hypnotist, '[a]re you there? You can wake me up now. Are you there?' In *Europa*, the last in the trilogy to which it lends its name, the opening scene has the camera moving steadily, hypnotically, up a tunnel following train tracks; due to the angle and the lighting employed the tracks also resemble an unravelled film reel. The voice-over counts down from one to ten into hypnosis with all the usual instructions. In the closing scene of the film, the protagonist drowns as the hypnotist counts to his death: the last words spoken are those of the voice-over hypnotist: 'You want to wake up, to free yourself of the image of Europa but it is not possible.'

In a fax during one of von Trier's interviews, Vørsel clarified the answer to a question about the press release for the trilogy which characterised the three films as respectively, '*The Element of Crime* – substance: non-organic, *Epidemic* – substance: organic, and *Europa* – substance: conceptual.'[8] Vørsel wrote:

> I also remember (and this may in part be due to retrospective rationalization) that the terms 'non-organic,' 'organic,' and 'conceptual' were going to be connected to one of the common threads of the trilogy: hypnosis. In *The Element of Crime* the hypnosis theme is present as an obvious element, as theatre, as make-believe. In *Epidemic* it becomes a real, documented, organic expression. And in *Europa* – which wasn't even written when this press release was composed – the thought / idea was that the audience would be hypnotized.
>
> (96)

If *Epidemic* was supposed to represent hypnosis as 'real, documented, organic expression', this was achieved in part through the use of an authentic scene of hypnosis: Gitte was actually hypnotised when the

final scene was shot, and the crew, the hypnotist and the hypnotised subject had no idea what the manifestation of that hypnotic state would be. The instructions 'Enter the film "Epidemic"' were dubbed onto the film later, but her reactions, her descriptions of plague and death, her tears and distress, were indeed a response to an epidemic, albeit a fictional representation of one: von Trier and Vørsel had given her, according to the film commentary, some pages from Daniel Defoe to read, presumably and most likely, from *A Journal of the Plague Year*. The distressing scenes of hypnosis, therefore, are not 'acted' but are, in fact, real: Gitte is reacting to plague from within hypnosis with a shockingly high level of distress and fear. The film commentary by the writers explains that when the 'special effect' buboes needed to be applied to her neck, the hypnotist put Gitte into a deeper state of somnambulism for temporary periods of time. It is also clear from the commentary that there was only one long film take and Gitte was hypnotised throughout. The pre-hypnosis reading of Defoe explains why Gitte's descriptions of 'Epidemic' tally in no way with the excerpts of 'Epidemic' in the film, nor with the discussions von Trier and Vørsel have had while researching it.

Von Trier's film presents an infectious interlinking of plague, film and hypnosis. The plague in 'Epidemic' is named the D.I.N. disease: one shot shows a cross with the acronym crudely painted upon it. This is a film-maker's insider joke: D.I.N. stands for Deutsche Industrie-Norm, the West German–named standard for film-speed rating, used widely across Europe. At the same time, the name is consonant with *Epidemic*'s implication that film, and the images recorded upon it, can transmit plague; that film is a suggestive contagion. Under hypnosis, the film implies, the viewer of plaguey filmic images is even more susceptible to succumbing to the disease or being the vector which spreads it.[9] This is underscored by the name Mesmer, given to the central protagonist of 'Epidemic'. Von Trier's Mesmer, for all his idealism and medical expertise, spreads the plague by accident as he travels to the countryside hoping to cure the stricken.

Several types of traversal, of crossing, are at work in *Epidemic*, creating unusual and liminal effects and positionings. At the most basic level, the film itself, with its 'real' actors, 'real' sets, 'real' unscripted conversations and 'real' hypnotic scene, places the viewer in an uncertain position as regards the usual assumption of a film's entirely fictional status. Such effects are hallmarks of von Trier's later films, according to Caroline Bainbridge who describes how 'his work situates the spectator in ways that actively disrupt traditional film-theoretical accounts of cinematic

subjectivity by laying a particular emphasis on filmic strategies that confound our familiarity with fictional form in cinema'.[10] We are used to believing in the fiction of film; film-makers who appear in films playing themselves confuse this. In particular, Gitte's hypnosis is deeply affecting because of her distress and its duration; the excessiveness of the scene is compelling enough to make very uncomfortable viewing, which obfuscates the oddness of it resulting from her supposedly entering a film, its script, or even, as really happened, a piece of writing by Defoe. The information that this was a 'real' hypnosis makes it even more perplexing and ethically troublesome, forcing the viewer into complicity with the involuntary distress of another person whose hypnosis has been staged for their benefit at what appears to be great emotional or experiential cost. We find ourselves in the strange position of wishing the film were more fictional, that the acting was not quite so real or, once we know the details, wishing that Gitte had been simulating hypnosis.

It is Gitte's hysterical, hypnotised reaction to Defoe which raises the most questions. She is neither awake nor asleep, neither conscious nor unconscious, and from within that in-between place she is witness to images of plague, and experiences feelings of empathy and pain in response to those images. Her eventual manifestation of plague buboes, within the screenplay, becomes the extreme but logical extrapolation of her experience, for she is already suffering because of plague while she is under hypnosis. Her reactions are consonant with the depictions of those tormented by plague, or even by the thought of it, in Defoe's *A Journal of the Plague Year*, where women can go mad from grief, shrieking and crying, upon spotting a plague bubo on their child, and where the general public suffer from mass hysterical reactions:[11]

> It is scarce credible what dreadful Cases happened in particular Families every Day; People in the Rage of the Distemper, or in the Torment of their Swellings, which was indeed intollerable, running out of their own Government, raving and distracted, and oftentimes laying violent Hands upon themselves, &c. Mothers murthering their own Children, in their Lunacy, some dying of meer Grief, as a Passion, some of meer Fright and Surprize, without any Infection at all; others frighted into Idiotism, and foolish Distractions, some into despair and Lunacy; others into mellancholy Madness.
>
> (81)

Many of the intense emotional states Defoe describes are a response to the imaginative possibilities of plague: it may take your child or your

loved one away, or your own life, and thus it is impossible to imagine the consequences; alternatively, the consequences imagined are so distressing as to bring on an emotional, psychological or even physical reaction. People are depicted as so traumatised by death and disease that they risk falling into madness or even dying themselves. To die of fright in such a situation is not to die as a response to a specific stimulus, but to die of shock induced by imaginative overload: to have taken the situation one observes around one and imagined it happening to oneself.

There is a space then, a psychic space or screen, in which or upon which Gitte sees the images of plague, similar perhaps to the screen so often associated with the dream.[12] Just like in a dream, Gitte appears to believe – judging from her reactions – that she is there in a plague-ravaged land. Yet unlike the dreamer, who too believes, in most cases, in the reality of their dreamworld, Gitte is able to communicate, however limitedly, able to report news back, while at the same time feeling emotionally and physically affected by what she is observing. She is between two worlds, the one imaginatively played out in her head, working from the suggestions of Defoe, and the other where her body resides, on a film set in a dining room in front of an audience. For, of course, her hypnosis is also a spectacle, for the actors, the crew and the film viewer. It puts in mind Charcot's photographs of hysterics, performing their compulsive twitches, which in an older day would have been the proof of possession, for audiences of young male doctors or for cameras that sought to capture and record the symptoms of these uncanny females.[13]

The internal screen I have been describing, the imaginative screen, can be related to the scenario set up by Slavoj Žižek in the introduction of his book, *Plague of Fantasies*, which opens with these lines:

> Let us imagine ourselves in the standard situation of male-chauvinist jealousy: all of a sudden I learn that my partner has had sex with another man – OK, no problem, I am rational, tolerant, I accept it … but then, irresistibly, images start to overwhelm me, concrete images of what they were doing (why did she have to lick him right *there*? Why did she have to spread her legs *so wide*?), and I am lost, sweating and quivering, my peace gone for ever. This *plague of fantasies* of which Petrarch speaks in *My Secret*, images which blur one's clear reasoning, is brought to its extreme in today's audiovisual media.[14]

Several points are remarkable about this introduction and relate to the hypnotic scene of *Epidemic*. Firstly, Žižek identifies these images as

occurring 'irresistibly', in such a way that they 'overwhelm', as though, indeed, the individual, robbed of his 'clear reasoning', is being subjected to upsetting and distressing images regardless of volition, images which appear unbidden, and yet, 'the viewer', subject and subjected, is imaginatively producing these images himself. Secondly, Žižek posits that these images have a clear and negative physiological response, causing 'sweating' and 'shivering', reactions similar, if less extreme, to those exhibited by Gitte and described by Defoe. Significant, too, is the way in which Žižek sets up this scene: 'Let us imagine' he begins, from the outset asking his reader to make use of their own imaginative capacities, to play out on their own internal screen the picture of a man beset by unwelcome images inspired by jealousy. Furthermore, these images, which Žižek, following Petrarch, names a plague of fantasies, are distinctly identified as being exacerbated by the screen upon which today's 'audiovisual experiences' are projected.[15] An opening such as this, which draws one immediately into a plague(d) scene, promises much for an elaboration of the plaguing intensities of fantasies, internal images and the cinema screen, especially from a theorist well known for combining film analysis with psychoanalytic theories. Žižek claims that fantasies are necessary for our construction of reality in order to ward of the real horror of being (7); if this is the case then the 'plague of fantasies' is not only normal but vital and constitutive, a proposition which would also need to account for their infectious suggestibility and to consider how this in turn infects the structures of our relationships with others. Yet, while Žižek subsequently has a great deal to say in his book about fantasy and about cinema, he returns only briefly to plague, in an argument about racism and discrimination.

This second discussion of plague draws upon Jean Delumeau's descriptions of the cycle of reactions that used to occur during plague outbreaks in medieval cities: first people ignore the disease; next they retreat and avoid others; they follow this with religious fervour; then debauchery; and, finally, people 'return to life as usual, and again behave as if nothing terrible is going on' (161). These are all recognisable plague responses, evident in many plague texts, whether or not the order is exactly accurate. What intrigues Žižek is the eventual return to the first reaction, to the continuation of 'life as usual'. He points out that it 'does not occupy the same structural role as the first … since it no longer signals the desperate attempt to ignore the reality of plague, but, rather, its exact opposite: resigned acceptance.' (161–2). So far, the argument is straightforward: plague's inexplicability forces people to find meaning in a variety of behaviours contrary to those they usually

enact before realising that there is nothing they can do in the face of such inevitability except to live alongside it: plague eventually, in Žižek's reading, exhausts its ability to drive people to distraction and to seek meaning elsewhere. In Chapter 1, such an attenuation in imaginative responses to plague once the outbreak has become established is noted by Raymond Stephenson in Defoe's *A Journal of the Plague Year* and Camus's *The Plague*. But then Žižek asks:

> Does not the same go for the more gradual replacement of (sexually, racially …) aggressive with more 'correct' expressions, like the chain *nigger – Negro – black – African-American* or *crippled – disabled – bodily challenged*?
>
> (162)

In these chains of 'metaphorical substitution', an offensive term is disguised, thereby inadvertently strengthening the effect it is trying to circumvent; Žižek's solution is to '*return to the first link in the chain* and use it in a non-aggressive way' which, he argues, is 'like following the patterns of "life as usual" the second time in the case of plague' (162). Whether or not Žižek is right about the chain of replacement, which is contentious enough in its suggestion that an appropriate response to discriminative or offensive language is 'resigned acceptance', his analogy between plague responses and language substitutions does not hold.[16] In Žižek's schema, it is the body or presence of the 'Other', labelled to exclude, which causes the names which-are-not-names, the series of replacement renamings. Quite differently, in the plague analogy, it is the disease which causes the round of different behaviours, a disease which is mysterious, unstoppable and deadly. What Gitte's reaction to plague in *Epidemic* illuminates is the fact that plague cannot be disarmed, ignored or reinscribed in the same manner as epitaphs, however divisive and discriminatory. Plague is a force of nature, not just a name coined by one dominant group to subjugate or dismiss another; its metaphorical usage has indeed been mobilised to exclude and to stigmatise, as in the case of the Jews, but the power of plague resides precisely in its ability to outstrip language: to be, within the Lacanian framework which informs Žižek's work, the irreducible Real. The resigned acceptance to the disease Žižek identifies has nothing of the reclamation which has taken place in the use of 'nigger' by black Americans. Instead, it is a position of absolute defeat in the face of plague. As people suffer, plague runs rife, disrupts boundaries, infects and traumatises, as is seen in *Epidemic*'s final scene in the dining room.

The internal screen and the screen in its physical presence in the movie theatre both play host to plague; the screen is needed in order for the plague of suggestive fantasies, images or impressions to arise. From Gitte's experience in *Epidemic*, hypnosis appears to be one way of activating the internal screen; strong emotions such as fear of death or jealousy appear, following on from Defoe and Žižek, to be another. Žižek suggests, moreover, that the cinema screen may replace or supplement the internal screen. In his seminal study *Psychoanalysis and Cinema: The Imaginary Signifier*, Christian Metz outlines a reciprocal relation between the external and internal screen in the cinema experience:

> There are two cones in the auditorium: one ending on the screen and starting both in the projection box and in the spectator's vision insofar as it is projective, and one starting from the screen and 'deposited' in the spectator's perception insofar as it is introjective (on the retina, a second screen).
>
> (51)

According to Metz, this is a function of vision itself:

> All vision consists of a double movement: projective (the 'sweeping' searchlight) and introjective: consciousness as a sensitive recording surface (as a screen).
>
> (50)

The light that we cast in the look, and which also comes back to us from the cinema screen, relies upon the common metaphor of vision as a searchlight. This returns us to hypnosis through a curious anecdote told by Freud in the preface he wrote to Hippolyte Bernheim's influential book *Suggestion* (1888):

> Indeed, who has not had the experience of a patient falling into a hypnotic sleep whom he has had no intention of hypnotizing and who certainly had no previous conception of hypnosis? A female patient takes her place for the purpose of having her eyes or throat examined; there is no expectation of sleep either on the part of the physician or the patient; but no sooner does the *beam of light* fall on her eyes than she goes to sleep and, perhaps for the first time in her life, she is hypnotised.
>
> (80–1, italics mine)

The assurance of Freud's tone is surprising here: this would be such an unlikely outcome these days that if it did occur, it may risk being pathologised or medicalised as a condition. Whether of medical examiners or beams of light, perceptions were certainly significantly different in Freud's time for hypnosis to have been a potential side effect for ladies visiting their doctors. The 'beam of light', conjuring as it does both the rationalism and mysticism of two types of enlightenment, is a familiar enough image and often used to induce hypnosis. It features as the light at the end of the tunnel in *Europa*'s opening scenes, intended as part of an attempt to hypnotise the viewer. What emerges from the conjunction of these insights from Freud, Defoe, Žižek and *Epidemic*, is a theory of the cinema screen as capable of opening a hypnotic relation between the viewer and the images seen, images which can plague as well as represent plague, images which can trigger intense physiological reactions.[17] Von Trier's conception of audience hypnosis is by no means new: early film theorists immediately made the connection between the state of fascination in which a viewer takes in a film and the fixation of the hypnotised subject.

In 1916 a German professor at Harvard, Hugo Münsterberg, published his slim study *The Photoplay: A Psychological Study*, in which, despite the youth of the still-silent medium, he argued for cinema as an art form in its own right, with distinct aesthetic differences from the photograph or theatre play to which it was commonly compared. As a psychologist, Münsterberg was particularly drawn by the way film affects its viewers through its technological capabilities of the close-up, the cut-back and the flash-forward, as well as the possibility of multiple and very different locations. Through these methods, the photoplay, as he calls the film, escapes the restrictions of space, time and linearity that are part of our everyday experience; these are replaced by an emphasis upon those aspects of life which the new abilities of film are able to demonstrate, stimulate and affect: 'forms of the inner world, namely, attention, memory, imagination, and emotion'.[18] In this way, the film 'can act as our imagination acts. It has the mobility of our ideas which are not controlled by the physical necessity of outer events but by the psychological laws for the association of ideas' (38). In her book on early cinema, Laura Marcus comments that 'Münsterberg appears to have been claiming that film images and movement were projections, perhaps reflections, of consciousness'.[19] If this is so, then the cinema screen supplements or even temporarily replaces the internal, imaginative screen, even without spoken words.

Cinema's images, Münsterberg argues, are suggestive, and suggestion is a powerful cinematic tool:

> A suggestion, on the other hand, is forced on us. The outer perception is not only a starting point but a controlling influence. The associated idea is not felt as our creation but as something to which we have to submit. The extreme case is, of course, that of the hypnotiser whose word awakens in the mind of the hypnotised person the idea which he cannot resist. He must accept them as real, he must believe that the dreary room is a beautiful garden in which he picks flowers.
>
> (42)

As with Žižek's man plagued by jealous fantasies, the language is that of coercion, of the screen-image or the suggestion it creates as one to which we are subjected subjects, 'forced', 'influenced', 'submissive' and incapable of resisting. This is how Gitte reacts under hypnosis. The suggestion is an infection: a brief reference in Münsterberg's text alerts us to the prevalent contemporary concerns of cinema's infectious power: 'Even if the police did not demand that actual crimes and suicides should never be shown on the screen, for mere artistic reasons it would be wiser to leave the climax to the suggestion to which the whole scene has led' (42). In the same year that Münsterberg's study was published, the director of the British Board of Film Censors, T. P. O'Connor, produced 43 grounds for scene deletion which included representations of 'gruesome murder' and other crimes, as well as various political taboos such as the representation of the British in India in an 'odious' light or the relations of capital to labour.[20] Clearly, the revolutionary possibilities of cinema, its power to 'infect' the public with suggestions, ideas and images that may encourage public disorder or criticism of government policy, was something feared by the authorities. This fear has not left broadcasters: the controversy over the film 'Death of a President' (2006), which blends archive footage with fiction to depict the assassination of President George Bush, was a recent case in point. CNN refused to show trailers and two major theatre chains in the US, Regal Entertainment Group and Cinemark USA, refused to screen the movie. John Beyer of the UK pressure group MediaWatch claimed, '[t]here's a lot of feeling against President Bush and this may well put ideas into people's heads'.[21]

The reaction of the BBFC to the potentialities of the cinema was a parallel of the French authorities' response, a hundred years earlier, to

the introduction of mesmerism to Paris in the late eighteenth century by a Swiss physician. The theories of mesmerism and animal magnetism disseminated by Franz Anton Mesmer, whose name, as we have seen, is used in 'Epidemic', were the precursors to what would later become known as hypnosis. In discussing the commission which was set up to investigate the scientific validity of mesmerism in the mid 1780s, Léon Chertok and Isabelle Stengers write:

> It [the commission] represents the attempt to submit to the order of science a practice that seemed threatening to political and social order. The Viennese Mesmer had, in a manner of speaking, brought the plague to Paris, an 'epidemic which spread to all of France' and which Lafayette, in 1784, propagated with equal success in the United States.[22]

In 'Epidemic' Mesmer carries and disseminates the plague and, indeed, it appeared to the commission that there was something infectious about mesmerism. Chertok and Stengers trace the way in which the commission excluded mesmerism from the realm of science, and thus from scientific reason, or rather 'a *particular* kind of reason, armed with the experimental methods of purification and isolation' (26). In other words, mesmerism and the mesmeric crisis it produced did not lend itself to scientific testing: there were too many conditions which could not be controlled, too many elements which could not be purified into a reproducible laboratory setting and language. Thus mesmerism was abandoned outside the walls of science, with the conclusion that 'imagination is the true cause of the effects attributed to magnetism' (16). Like the curative Greek *pharmakos* cast out of the ancient city to exorcise plague, the epidemic or plague of mesmerism becomes that which through its exclusion will keep scientific reason pure and scientific experimentation aseptic in their need for demonstrable and reproducible relations between cause and effect. In the final clip presented of 'Epidemic', Mesmer realises that despite his desire to help, it is he himself who has spread plague on his journey from an infected city to the uninfected countryside: in trying to cure he has poisoned, a structural position of blurring between two ordinarily opposed functions that has already been noted in relation to plague narratives and their history.[23] In 'Epidemic', Mesmer leaves the city walls despite the entreaties of a government now to be composed, due to the plague emergency, of a cabinet of doctors, the final triumph of scientific reason and rule.

Chertok and Stengers point out that hypnotisable subjects are less common in the late-twentieth century than they were in Freud's time, a feature supported by the anecdote of Freud's female patients unwittingly hypnotised during eye examinations. The two critics parenthetically suggest that this decline is due to the ubiquity of the cinema or television: the physical screen is starting to transplant the internal screen. In the past, a 'purer' state of hypnosis seemed to be more commonly achievable; a new, easily achievable state has more recently been inaugurated by the screen on which we view audio-visual materials. Such observations are supported by Jonathan Crary's work on the history and significance of attention in *Suspension of Perception: Attention, Spectacle and Modern Culture*. Following a discussion of how hypnosis was perceived as an 'intense refocusing and narrowing of attention', he comments that television has now 'emerged as the most pervasive and efficient system for the management of attention'.[24] Crary also tracks the continual debates about what actually constitutes a hypnotic state; one need only turn to any recent collection of papers on hypnosis to see that argument still rages about its delimitations, whether such a state is clearly definable from normal consciousness and what the exact nature of suggestion might be (65–72).[25] Certainly, well before these debates were penned, Freud's notable experience with the 'beam of light' is highly suggestive of the cinematic scene.

The troublesome notion of infectious suggestion in relation to the cinema and hypnosis is raised again in a later but influential film study by Siegfried Kracauer, *Nature of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality* (1960). Kracauer's analysis of the film spectator posits her as a fascinated *tabula rasa* and, like Münsterberg, he has recourse to the analogy of hypnotism:

> The moviegoer is much in the position of a hypnotised person. Spellbound by the luminous rectangle before his eyes – which resembles the glittering object in the hand of the hypnotist – he cannot help succumbing to the suggestions that invade his blank mind. Film is an incomparable instrument of propaganda.[26]

Suggestion, fascination, spells and hypnosis: repeatedly, film critics turn to this language, these powerful states and the comparisons they inspire, in their discussion of spectatorship. The relatively early analogies between the film-goer and the hypnotised subject assume passivity on the part of the viewer, a construction of spectatorship which was to be refined and made more complex by the introduction of

psychoanalytic thought into the realm of film analysis. The later, more theoretical approach to thinking the spectator involved a consideration of the identification at work between the images and viewer, as well as the spaces of non-identification that are revealed by feminist film critique, but identification does not move the debate away from hypnosis, despite many of the more Lacanian-informed film analyses not taking the hypnotic relation into consideration. Von Trier's *Epidemic* returns us to hypnosis by way of plague and contagion.

As we have seen, the interaction between the images on the screen and the mind of the spectator is constructed by early theorists as a contagious phenomenon, with suggestion as the pivotal concept. Suggestion is a crucial element in the structure of von Trier's plague film and it is at work in activating the internal screens which elicit the reactions which Defoe depicts and Žižek conjectures at the beginning of *Plague of Fantasies*. Shortly after the publication of Münsterberg's film study, Sigmund Freud published Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego, in 1921. This text is particularly striking for its consideration of how contagion, hypnosis and suggestion work within groups and hold them together. It begins with a summary of the work of French psychologist Gustave Le Bon in *The Crowd* (1895), which Freud believes offers a 'brilliantly executed picture of the group mind'.[27] As the Freudian commentator Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen points out in his attentive close reading, Freud concurs with many of the propositions in Le Bon's account. Le Bon believes that three dynamics are at work in groups: contagion, suggestibility – which he links to the hypnotic relation – and a lessening of the faculty of conscience. Freud's argument does not contest the presence of these factors in group relations, but rests upon the need to posit a libidinal tie at the root of group formations and, to be able to make such a claim, the group needs a leader, whereas Le Bon concerns himself with the mass, the rabble, the spontaneously formed group.

Giving the group a leader gives it a focus, just as, and Freud's conclusion is explicit, the hypnotist is the 'leader' for the hypnotised subject. This enables suggestion, contagion and 'mental infection' to be directional: from the leader to the group, as opposed to just 'among' the group with no assignable origin. Although Freud admits that group members can respond to the contagion of other members, he reiterates that this is only possible because there is a leader in the first place. As Borch-Jacobsen highlights in his book *The Freudian Subject*, this conveniently reduces the group relation to the individual relation, and thus group psychology is really only individual psychology writ large: the group relation is the

hypnotic relation; for Freud it is a 'group of two' but 'multiplie[d]' (160 and 177).[28] Instead of banishing Le Bon's theories of contagion and suggestibility, what this does, and Freud does not directly acknowledge this, is to install them at the heart of the psychoanalytic experience and vocabulary. Those 'enigmatic words' (157), as Freud calls hypnosis and suggestion, become those familiar psychoanalytic phenomena, transference and identification:

> The hypnotist avoids directing the subject's conscious thoughts towards his own intentions, and makes the person upon whom he is experimenting sink into an activity in which the world is bound to seem uninteresting to him; but at the same time the subject is in reality unconsciously concentrating his whole attention upon the hypnotist, and is getting into an attitude of *rapport*, of transference [*der Übertragung*] on to him.[29]
>
> (158)

> The other members of the group, whose ego ideal would not, apart from this [need for a strong leader] have become embodied in his [the leader's] person without some correction, are then carried away with the rest by 'suggestion', that is to say, by means of identification.
>
> (162)

The contagion of suggestion can infect from leader to group members or from group member to group member, but the fundamental psychic operation is the same transferential and contagious hypnotic relation, wherein the individual's ego ideal is replaced by the object the group focuses upon, the leader, who occupies the same structural position as the hypnotist or, indeed, the psychoanalyst (159).[30] The strong and interlinking relationship between suggestion, hypnosis and transference is made by several commentators, but it is Borch-Jacobsen who emphasises the contamination, the contagion, at work between them in Freud's discourse.[31] Quoting Freud's admission in the *Introductory Lectures* that 'it must dawn on us that in our technique we have abandoned hypnosis only to rediscover suggestion in the shape of transference', Borch-Jacobsen asks, in a critical move which puts contagion at the heart of psychoanalysis:

> If transference translates suggestion and if suggestion translates transference, what are to make of this reciprocal translatability,

> this conceptual *mimesis*? Does it not threaten to undermine our confidence in a unidirectional translation and at the same time our confidence in this science of translation (of transference, displacement, deformation, and so on) that is called psychoanalysis? … For if transference and suggestion are one and the same thing under two different names, the 'riddle' of suggestion inevitably contaminates transference and all that this word (this *Rätselwort?* this *Zauberwort?*) governs in psychoanalysis – namely, everything, in a sense: psychoanalysis as a whole.
>
> (151)

Psychoanalysis is entangled in a logic of contamination which is underpinned by transference: this chimes with one of the conclusions within Chapter 4, where Freud's dream of the Three Fates was read to expose the plaguey-plagiarism at work in the most fundamental of psychoanalytic concepts, and within the processes of psychoanalytic training and knowledge transmission. Freud turns the hypnotic relation into one of transference; Borch-Jacobsen patiently extrapolates how transference translates suggestion. Freud's second block quote above states that suggestion is identification: emerging from this is an unarguable contamination within what is demonstrating itself to be a plagued psychoanalytic lexicon intended to articulate the relationships between leader and crowd, analyst and analysand, hypnotist and hypnotised. These concepts are incapable of resisting or repressing their own cross-contamination. Hypnosis, transference, identification, suggestion: none of them are simple; all implicate one another and bleed into each other in a way that makes them collectively key to discussions about cinematic spectatorship.

Several conclusions lead from this. Firstly, hypnosis is conceptually contaminated and contaminating. Von Trier's film stages hypnosis as a literally contaminating affair, a place where plague can be caught through suggestion, whether from the hypnotist, the film script, or a piece of writing by Defoe. Secondly, the linkage between hypnosis, suggestion, transference and identification opens pathways for a re-examination of psychoanalytically influenced film theory and its general preference for considering identification alone, at the expense and exclusion of the other phenomena. Despite von Trier's reanimation of critical interest in the hypnotic relation and the cinema screen through the *Europa* trilogy, it remains to be seen whether hypnosis will always remain the rather awkward, weird sister of mainstream academic film theory. Additionally, although Borch-Jacobsen's work in *The Freudian*

Subject is invaluable, the conclusion that he comes to vis-à-vis hypnosis is metaphysical and abstract rather than experiential and concrete since it assumes, without discussion, that there is a pure, generic hypnotic experience to be theorised as opposed to the different gradations, depths and types of hypnosis described by practitioners. It is the potentially more contaminated, fluctuating and less pure phenomenon of the hypnotic relation, as opposed to the 'actual' (and contentious) hypnotic state, that is closest to the cinematic viewing experience.

The hypnotic relation is a suggestive one, one which influences the subject, can fascinate him or her and can facilitate contagion among groups. By taking hypnosis out of a purely therapeutic context Freud opens the way for considering its potential to operate within much wider spheres of experience, such as those of groups or, as I have proposed, within cinema spectatorship. The film theorist Raymond Bellour, known in particular for his analyses of Hitchcock's films, comments upon the importance of hypnosis in the viewing experience:

> I establish the connection between the film state and hypnosis by referring to the psychoanalytic notion of the ego ideal as it is developed by Freud in *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*. This allows us to understand more clearly how the cinema produces a deep identification, both subjective and social, which explains the very great fascination it exerts.[32]

Bellour makes this brief mention of hypnosis right at the end of a lengthy interview about film theory conducted with Janet Bergstrom, who refers to a seminar series of his on film and hypnosis which, sadly, has never been published. He is, however, one of the few recent theorists to draw an analogy between hypnosis and what he calls 'the film state'. As Bellour highlights, the relation to the screen is helped by Freud's work on hypnosis and groups by adding a social, a group, dimension to the experience. I take this to mean not just that watching a film happens in a movie theatre full of people – videos, DVDs and even cinematic viewing experiences can be undertaken alone – but a recognition that the screen experience is always potentially a public event; film is always addressed to a public, not merely to one person in private hypnotic therapy with another. Bellour also makes the point that 'in the film as in hypnosis one is at a level of simulation which allows for a more exact comparison between the cinema-effect and the hypnotic process than between the cinema-effect and the dream' (101). For Gitte, for Žižek's jealous man, and for the film viewer, the images

seen are not real but they simulate reality; they screen the real, in both the sense of projecting and also that of veiling. *Epidemic* does this: it shows its fascinated, perhaps even horrified, viewers a 'real' scene of hypnosis which seems to be both authentic in the reactions it causes and artificial because films are fictions. Her buboes are special effects, but Gitte undeniably and violently responds to plague and its effects from within her hypnotised state.

Freud's group, hypnotically fascinated by its leader, thus has its counterpart in the spellbound spectators transfixed by the cinema screen. When glossing Le Bon, with approbation, Freud comments:

> A group is extraordinarily credulous and open to influence, it has no critical faculty, and the improbable does not exist for it. It thinks in images, which call one another up by association (just as they arise with individuals in states of free association), and whose agreement with reality is never checked by any reasonable agency.
>
> (104)

Even though psychologists today would no doubt object to or wish to refine this description of a group, it is not impossible to characterise the cinema spectator as exhibiting such traits, especially in relation to horror films, where the fact that the events depicted often involve the impossible or improbable does not prevent feelings of fear, disgust and horror being easily induced. Cinema spectators watch the plague of fantasies play itself out upon the screen which hypnotically holds them; they submit to the suggestions of film. Chapter 7 raises the question of what happens when the films they are watching, the images to which they submit, depict a plague of the infectious undead, and what sort of infectious suggestions are brought to bear upon the viewer in seeing such a plague. The final chapter of *Legacies of Plague* turns its attention to this question in the context of the zombie genre's depiction of apocalyptic infectious futures, without leaving behind the importance of hypnosis, suggestion and the screen.

7

Plague, Zombies and the Hypnotic Relation: Romero and After

Plague, epidemics and infectious diseases are no strangers to the cinema screen. The films which stage them fall broadly into three categories: firstly, those in which plague and the mass, mysterious, random and painful deaths it brings are utilised to raise questions about religious faith and belief in an afterlife, to explore the concept of redemption and the assumption that human existence is purposeful or ordained. The most influential of these remains Ingmar Bergman's *The Seventh Seal* (1957), in which a knight and his squire return from the Crusades to a plague-ravaged countryside, through which flagellants travel and where they witness a woman burnt at the stake for consorting with the devil and therefore bringing plague upon the people.[1] The events these two wanderers experience among the plague-stricken feed the knight's crisis of faith and culminates in a dramatic chess game with death. In the second category, there are films in which plague or epidemic is used to explore a different type of crisis, centring on the need for containment and how that affects the population and those making decisions on their behalf. Typically this involves several difficult ethical dilemmas for the medical and scientific community, and also for the political and military representatives who are inevitably involved in the management of a large-scale infectious disease outbreak. These films tend to raise questions on the one hand about the safety and objectives of scientific work and discoveries, and on the other about the motives and political partiality of the military or its elite personnel. The mass destruction of a large population to save an even larger one is nearly always proposed and usually circumvented, as is the case in *The Andromeda Strain* (1971) and the more recent movies *Outbreak* (1995) and *Contagion* (2001).[2] Interestingly and unusually, the film *Doomsday* (2008) opens in a future where the whole of Scotland has been annexed from the rest of the

British Isles through the building of an enormous wall in order for the plague epidemic suffered by the Scots to die out through its extermination of all possible hosts. These types of films and plotlines tend to surface when a new disease raises its head as an epidemic threat: *Outbreak*, for instance, was made just after the world had been shocked by the severity of the ghastly Ebola outbreak in Africa; *Doomsday* in the wake of Avian Flu pandemic scares.

In the final category, there is a whole genre of films which have reinvented plague in an exploration of the infectious undead: the zombie movie. Still popular today – as the recent successes of *28 Weeks Later* (2007), *28 Days Later* (2002) and the remake of *Dawn of the Dead* (2004) prove – the first zombie movie, *White Zombie*, was released in 1932. However, it was George A. Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* (1968), the beginning of a five-part zombie series, that established the zombie film as a genre in its own right instead of merely a minor subset of horror, and most zombie movies still pay homage to Romero in various sequences. It was through the popularity of Romero's films that zombies became renowned as carriers of infection. Of the three types of plague film outlined here, the zombie movie's staging of plague has created a genre capable of incorporating the questions which other epidemic movies raise about humanity's existential status, institutional decision making and the motivations of science and the military, while at the same time presenting us with the monstrous and troubling figure of the infectious zombie. No typologies are watertight, of course, nor are they stable: von Trier's *Epidemic*, discussed in Chapter 6, does not fit easily into any of the above categories, although it joins several of the most recent zombie movies in exploring the relation between film and plague, as well as proposing that there is a relation between hypnosis and plague infection. Starting with the first ever zombie movie, this chapter traces a history of the zombie film through some of its most famous incarnations, made by Romero, up to a very recent film which links zombieism with homosexuality. Never far from these discussions is an interest in the role of hypnosis, the behaviour of groups, the nature of the 'human' and what psychoanalysis calls the death-drive.

The Haitian word 'zombie', used for the dead resurrected in a Voodoo ritual, made its impact in the twentieth-century West through the publication of *The Magic Island* (1929). Written by W. B. Seabrook, a drunken explorer and travel writer, the book describes Haitian rites apparently witnessed by the author. *The Magic Island* seems to have been the inspiration behind the film *White Zombie* (1932), which is set in Haiti and features a white hypnotist who creates a slave population

of zombies under his control to run his mill and secure his colonial fortune. When he falls in love with a beautiful newly-wed he hypnotically zombifies her and she leaves her new husband in a trance. After many trials, the loving couple are reunited and she, miraculously, emerges from the trance and returns to 'normal', a fate denied the other zombies who follow their evil, hypnotist master over the cliff edge of his castle. Although various other films and books – the latter mainly apocalyptic science fiction – begin to utilise the figure of the zombie after the appearance of *The Magic Island* and *White Zombie*, it was the cult success of George A. Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* in the late 60s which was responsible for establishing the zombie film as a genre. Ever since, instead of a hypnotised slave, the zombie has been a dangerous, infectious embodiment of the living dead who cannibalistically parasitises the living: Romero made his zombies plague carriers and able to infect others, to turn them, too, into zombies. They no longer need a master, a hypnotist, to entrance them: instead they become a leaderless mass, drawn to the living in order to eat.

Unlike the vampire, who had a firm literary presence before appearing on the screen, the zombie's entry into Western mainstream consciousness and culture was primarily achieved through film. The vampire's presence has long been accompanied by rats and an explicit link with plague was made by F. W. Murnau in his early and influential film, *Nosferatu* (1922), in which a vampire's arrival in a small German town precipitates a plague outbreak. In general, the vampire's relationship with humanity is an individual one; the personal tie a vampire has with its victim is often of importance, as is the case in Bram Stocker's *Dracula* (1897). In contrast, the zombie is incapable of such distinctions between humans; the emphasis of the films is upon mass contagion and the (mis)functioning of the human and zombie groups. The nature, behaviour and screen presence of the living dead also have implications for the infectious hypnotic relation between the cinema viewer and the screen – which was discussed vis-à-vis von Trier's *Epidemic* in Chapter 6 – due to the history that zombies continue to have with hypnosis and trance states.

In *Night of the Living Dead*, a group of people trapped in an isolated farmhouse surrounded by zombies tune into the radio to hear the broadcaster describe 'an epidemic of mass murder being committed by an army of assassins' who are in 'a kind of trance'. Romero's living dead move slowly, awkwardly, as though hypnotised. In fact, they are comparable in their movements to the entirely hypnotised cast of Werner Herzog's *Heart of Glass* (1976). The zombies share the same glazed,

unfocused stare that is associated with the hypnotised or entranced; they are automaton-like, as though controlled by another force, but they are still recognisably human, even rather ordinary, as they materialise wearing whatever they died in: dressing gowns, work clothes, underwear or even naked. To be hypnotised is to be dissociated from one's surrounding; such are the zombies. While horrific in their liminal occupation of a space between death and life, in their clumsiness and mindlessness zombies can be irresistibly comic. According to Isabel Cristina Pinedo in *Recreational Horror*, this conjunction of humour and terror is symptomatic of the horror film and produces for the viewer the reassurance of distance by allowing laughter to relieve tension.[3] On the other hand, she argues that humour can induce proximity to terror by producing 'incongruous, contradictory, or illogical effects' (47). Although zombies tick nearly every box on Freud's list of the uncanny, their uncanniness is a product of their affect and this is often at the point, as Pinedo notes, when they are close to humour.[4] For example, in Romero's third film in the series, *Day of the Dead* (1985), a zombie nicknamed Bub is responding well to the scientists' experiments by demonstrating that he knows or remembers how to use everyday objects. Dr Logan offers him Stephen King's best-selling vampire horror novel, *Salem's Lot*, and the incongruity of a green-faced, rotting zombie examining such a book as though he vaguely remembers what to do with it, while amusing, is also one of the points at which Bub undermines the distance between the human and the zombie, making Logan's grisly experiments on zombie 'specimens' appear inhumane rather than scientific.[5] The scene underlines an earlier statement of Logan's: 'They are us. They are the extensions of us. They are the same animal, just functioning less perfectly'. In fact, Logan's scientific experiments are an inversion of the parasitism of the zombie-need to feed upon the human and he is eventually executed for his experiments upon recently zombified members of the human team and for using dead human body parts as meat rewards for Bub's progressively 'human' behaviour.

Zombies transgress taboos and cause taboos to be transgressed: they are cannibals, they are violent, and to combat them the living have to break the taboos which surround the treatment of the dead and usually demand respect for a corpse. As highlighted by René Girard and Sigmund Freud, both theorists of group behaviour, what is taboo is often contagious and so contained by ritual; when the rituals are discarded then violent contagion is the result.[6] In *Night of the Living Dead*, the violence unleashed by the zombie attacks and rebuffs spills over to the human occupants of the farmhouse, when Ben slaps Barbara and

eventually shoots another member of the group for disloyalty. The contagion is spread through zombie contamination, the bites which cause a swift death, followed by reanimation into undead zombification. One of the most disturbing aspects of zombie films arises from the shots of zombies en masse, the horde of entranced, rotting human figures all moving towards the same goal. These zombies, as Gregory Waller has noted in his book *The Living and the Undead*, are leaderless, a mass without a master, but with a collective single mission.[7] Zombies have moved on from the hypnotised corpses of *White Zombies*'s master-hypnotist; instead they recall Le Bon's characterisation of the crowd, discussed in Chapter 6: they are susceptible to contagion and suggestion, and lacking in conscience. At play is the lack of individuation which they threaten: one zombie is similar to another and to be bitten is to have one's individuality erased when reanimation ushers the victim into the massed ranks of the undead. Any small difference of clothing or degree of putrefaction among the zombie groups only exacerbate their similarity, since these are markers which refer to the state of their corpse when they died, not anything that has been chosen to create individuality since reanimation. There was a comparable fear surrounding the phenomenon of hypnosis, as Jonathan Crary's study, *Suspensions of Perception*, has pointed out: 'Hypnosis, as researchers disturbingly realised throughout the 1890s, placed familiar notions of individual identity in jeopardy'.[8] Crary notes how hypnosis, 'with its profoundly indecipherable trance states', and its display of 'a lower, regressive, or childlike state' was 'radically irreconcilable with dominant forms of Western rationalism' (231). Like the hypnotised subject, whose individuality is (seemingly and temporarily) suspended and surrendered to the hypnotist, the zombie lacks individuation, the ability to think rationally, and behaves as might a human deprived of an ego or a superego: it is, as Dr Logan articulates, 'working on instinct, a deep, dark, primordial instinct'. Logan's comment recalls Freud's theory of the death instincts, which are inescapable in a discussion of plague and zombies.

At the end of *Night of the Living Dead*, the 'plague of murder' referred to by the radio broadcaster seems finished as a vigilante group regain control of the area. The film is encased by two scenes, at the beginning and end, which intimate that the zombie–human distinction is not that easily made: in the opening scene, Barbara and Johnny mistake a zombie for a man; at the end, the unfortunate Ben, lone survivor in the farmhouse, is identified as a zombie by the vigilantes and shot at long range.[9] These incidents are human misjudgements since zombies actually negate the values usually prized as human: they lack compassion,

the ability to speak, respect for the living, familial feelings and fear of death. Unlike the rational, passionate and eloquent vampire, who needs a stake through the heart to be killed, the zombie's brain must be destroyed: like a malfunctioning computer, 'reanimated' but lacking in any of the 'heart' (human) emotions, the zombie's brain is a reductive mass of grey flesh playing host to meaningless electronic surges, one of Victor Frankenstein's abortions. This is gruesomely demonstrated in *Day of the Dead* when Logan shows how a zombie stripped of his skull and outer brain, leaving a corpse with only the primitive cortex at the top of the spine, can still have motor reactions in his limbs upon the application of electronic pulses. Zombies are a spectacle of plague, of infection, of the noxiousness of disease which can overrun, disfigure and determine the human body without invitation.[10]

R. H. W. Dillard has noted of *Night of the Living Dead* that it is 'an orchestrated descent to death in which all efforts toward life fail' and identifies the fear that operates in the film as 'fear of the ordinary and of life itself'.[11] The basis for this argument is that whatever the living do in the film, whether they are brave or cowardly, rational or hysterical, in love or embittered, the result is the same: death. Yet zombies, like their human counterparts, are a strange admixture of the death instincts and the life instincts: they are the walking dead, spreading their dangerous contagion through a compulsion to attack, infect and consume the living, but they also represent a macabre aspect of the will-to-live, a stubborn resistance to the finality and stillness of death. They make the life and death instincts appear to be two sides of the same deadly coin, as Freud in fact intimates at the end of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), writing that '[t]he pleasure principle [later to become cast as the life instincts] seems actually to serve the death instincts'.[12] In a text penned just before his death, Freud posits that the death instincts 'tend towards a return to an earlier state', which is one way of articulating the effects of the zombie plague: instead of death and cessation, the body is returned to a (grotesque, infectious resemblance) of its earlier living state.[13] Such a death instinct can be seen as an enactment of regression, just like the hypnotic state was considered to be. Paul Hirst and Penny Woolley, in *Social Relations and Human Attributes*, argue that trance or hypnosis actually corresponds to the death wishes described by Freud because it is a form of 'self-obliteration'.[14] The figure of the zombie – hypnotised, embodying a death instinct which obliterates individuality – constitutes for the viewer an image of what Piendo calls the 'terror *implicit* in everyday life' (39). They literally embody all that is inexorable, driven and mechanical about life, apparent in their

movements and their hypnotised mien, combined with the horrors, rot and disfigurement of the grave. Žižek's characterisation of the Lacanian death drive in *The Plague of Fantasies* marks a similar conjunction of life and death:

> What defines the death drive in Lacan is this double gap: not the simple opposition between life and death, but the split of life itself into 'normal' life and horrifying 'undead' life, and the split of the dead into 'ordinary' dead and the 'undead' machine.[15]

The zombie is a combination of the 'horrifying "undead" life' with the '"undead" machine'. What Romero adds to this is infectious plague and all the fearful anxieties that accompany it.

For Pinedo, '[h]orror denaturalises the repressed by transmuting the "natural" elements of everyday life into the unnatural form of the monster' (39). The zombie thus figures a return (of the body) of the repressed but everyday horrors that we would rather not consider, coupled, to exacerbate matters, with the ability to replicate this monstrosity through infecting living humans. For Dillard, 'the fear of the ordinary and of life itself' exhibited in *Night of the Living Dead* has been expressed before, being of the same order as 'Søren Kierkegaard's sickness unto death or Edgar Allan Poe's fever called living or Jean-Paul Sartre's nausea pressed to its extreme' (22). What Dillard fails to note, however, is that these authors – as does *Night of the Living Dead* – specifically typify this fear as a contagion and a sickness. If life itself is sick, as these writers suggest in their very different ways, is it a comfort or a terror to imagine (to screen) a world in which this sickness is objectified into a monstrous, infectious zombie crowd? The ambivalence of the word 'screen' provides the answer given by most defenders of the horror genre: zombie films make a spectacle of some basic human terrors to do with death, disease and human behaviour, but they do so in the finite, entertaining space of the film-fiction, thus horror is experienced as chilling pleasure. However horrific the events of ordinary life may be, so the horror genre reassurance goes, they could not be as horrific as the lack of ordinary life and ordinary death in the zombie film. This appears to be a somewhat naïve attempt to recuperate horror as a sort of antidote to real life, one which does not take into account the way that audiovisual technologies can amplify the power of our imaginative capacities, as Žižek has argued and as was explored in Chapter 6.

In Romero's second zombie film, *Dawn of the Dead* (1978), the zombies return in huge numbers to a mall as though, even undead, they

still had the living's obsession with material consumption, hypnotically drawn to the shops in a parody of the trancelike uniformity that consumerism is accused of fostering.[16] With a noticeable ambiguity of tense and vocabulary, Stephen, one of the survivors, comments that, '[t]his is an important place in their lives'.[17] Zombies, like the plague when it ravaged Europe, are mysterious in origin: in *Night of the Living Dead* there is a suggestion of radiation poisoning put forward by a spokesman, but in the context of the film all official statements are at best speculative, at worst unhelpful or untrue. In this respect, zombies confront us as the inexplicable, the irrational, in a world we would like to think of as rational and explainable; they are what confounds science in a world where science is perceived to be at the forefront of progress. Zombie films are rarely interested in where the zombies came from or what began the zombie plague: most are content, like *Night of the Living Dead*, to provide a thin and incomplete intimation, if they do so at all. As we have seen with Artaud in Chapter 2 and Reich in Chapter 5, there is an unstable irrationality at work in uses of plague, embodied in these films in the inexplicable zombie and apparent in the irrational behaviour contagiously rife among the human groups who fight them.

What is fascinating about zombies, and what has ensured their cinematic longevity, is introduced in *Day of the Dead* with the zombie Bub, and further highlighted very explicitly within Romero's fourth zombie movie, *Land of the Dead* (2005): their resemblance to the human. Made during the Iraq War, *Land of the Dead* is unmistakably a political comment upon US military and financial greed, as well as a parody of the way in which Baghdad was carved into areas of differing safety, danger and provision, with the Green Zone at its apex reserved for coalition forces and their personnel. The city in *Land of the Dead* contains a similarly stratified society: the wealthy and hand-picked occupants of the Fiddler's Green Complex enjoy a simulacrum of 'life before' with their flats, malls and restaurants all combined in one protected and exclusive tower block, while the slums house the poor, among whom millenarian preachers rant, whores wander, communists agitate and people suffer from food shortages and what appears to be tuberculosis. However, these unfortunates are still 'safe', protected by high gates and blockaded bridges from the suburbs and outlying towns, which are occupied entirely by the undead. From the black and white, 50s images that begin the film, framed as 'Some Time Ago', and from the fragmented news reports in several languages which play over these, it is clear that this is no isolated phenomenon, but life as it now is, in every country. The zombies outnumber the living: plague has gone global.

The humans of *Land of the Dead* differ to those in Romero's previous zombie movies. In one of the early news reports it is stated that everyone who dies and is not immediately buried becomes one of the undead, as well as those who are infected by being bitten. In other words, every person carries within them the potential to return as a zombie; the disease of the undead is a dormant but generic infection throughout all levels of society. The fear and horror of zombification which all zombie films rely upon, the threat of an empty, unfeeling and undead future, is shaken in *Land of the Dead*: those in the slums lead lives which are almost as impoverished and meaningless as the undead 'lives' of the suburb zombies. In a significant moment, Cholo, who has been bitten, chooses not to be shot by his friend, ironically explaining, 'I always wanted to see how the other half live'. Choosing to be a zombie is perhaps better than choosing the ultimately unknown terrain of death. Secondly, the memory traces which brought the zombies to the mall in *Dawn of the Dead* and had Bub recall how to use objects in *Day of the Dead* are more pronounced: the opening scene in *Land of the Dead* has a bandstand occupied by zombies blowing tunelessly into incongruously shiny instruments. When the living need stores and provisions, vigilante groups go to the outlying areas on raids under the protection of fireworks which immobilise and transfix the undead, who watch these 'sky flowers' hypnotically, just as crowds of the living do at firework displays. These zombies share more traits with their 'other halves', the living, than they did in the earlier films.[18]

The crisis which *Land of the Dead* hinges upon is this incipient return to consciousness of the zombies. Led by a black petrol pump attendant, the undead mass together and make 'the long lurch' towards Fiddler's Green, freeing upon the way fellow zombies who had been strung up for 'live' target practice by the army. In the first piece of the film's dialogue, two vigilantes watch this attendant from behind cover as he attempts to fill a non-existent car with petrol (see Figure 7.1):

> Vigilante: They're trying to be us.
> Riley: They used to be us. They're learning to be us again.
> […]
> Vigilante: It's like they're pretending to be alive.
> Riley: Ain't that what we're doing? Pretending to be alive?

Right from the outset, then, 'real life' and what it means is already an atrophied form of living. In the final scene of the film, protected by a huge armoured vehicle, Riley stops a potential attack upon the

Figure 7.1 Land of the Dead's principal zombie, the petrol pump attendant, at the start of the film.

zombies, who, like the human refugees of the slums and the now destroyed Fiddler's Green, are leaving the carnage and trooping off in migrant lines. He comments: '[t]hey're just looking for a place to go. Same as us.' The armoured vehicle heads off to Canada in the final shot, releasing the last of the fireworks which have ceased to hypnotise the newly enfranchised and more cognisant zombies. *Night of the Living Dead* closed with the shooting of a black man by a group of white vigilantes; *Land of the Dead* returns to the race issue through its use of a black zombie to lead the attack on Fiddler's Green. Yet, despite the survival of the black zombie, Romero's ending still paints a bleak picture of the irreconcilability of different classes and factions of US society.

Romero's zombie infection in *Land of the Dead* represents a twenty-first century reincarnation of plague, the imaginary parallel of plagues that threaten outside the movie theatre in the form of SARS, Avian Flu or the 'plague' of 'Islamofascism', which themselves bespeak the fragility and instability of the human bond. The parasitism which infects all parts of the society depicted in *Land of the Dead*, from that of the mogul Mr Koffman, who exploits the slums' underclass to maintain the luxury of the rich, through to the zombies themselves, has its violence stripped bare in the staple zombie scenes of violent evisceration and mass feeding orgies. In *Land of the Dead*, the contrasts between zombie

and human, rich and poor, infected and uninfected is brutally subjected to dissolution. Living is parasitism and parasitism leads to (un)death. Humour in the film is grimly ironic; not the relief that Pinedo identifies within the horror genre but rather a bleak anamorphic grin in the face of widespread infection and death. The humans are ruthless, individualistic, greedy and suspicious whereas the zombies develop community feeling, empathy and a consciousness of injustice, yet this is born from a destructive desire for revenge: one of the first skills they acquire is how to use objects as weapons. Society of any kind or complexity, living or undead, results in violence: there is no ameliorative scapegoat, no *pharmakos* figure to carry plague's pollution away from the city. It is Girard's society of contagious, mimetic violence, discussed in Chapter 5, but without any salutary checks. There are those who remain to rebuild the Fiddler's Green complex and there is the small group of misfits who join Riley on his trip to Canada, but the implication is that both ventures will end up replicating the scenario just played out, which will merely endlessly repeat itself. Escaping plague is impossible; there are no limits to contagion since everyone is infected with death-dealing parasitism. Plague enflames embedded societal tensions and undermines the mechanisms which ordinarily work as their palliatives.

From *Dawn of the Dead* to *Land of the Dead*, zombies evolve, moving closer to their human counterparts and threatening the parameters of what constitutes the human and the nonhuman. Other recent zombie films, particularly *28 Days Later* and *28 Weeks Later*, have departed from the zombie conventions instituted by Romero. For instance, the first film in the *28* series begins by providing a reason for the outbreak: a virus carried in the blood is being tested on monkeys and primates; the animals are released by animal rights' protestors, who are quickly attacked by the newly liberated creatures, sparking the epidemic. The infection is called the Rage Virus; its symptoms are an enormous increase in anger and violence directed at others. The victims 'turn' in a similar way to the bitten in Romero's zombie films: once the infection occurs, through bites or blood getting into the mouth, eye or a wound, the nearby uninfected have ten to twenty seconds before the human becomes a livid, murderous monster. Once turned, the infected lose the ability to speak, are driven only by the desire to attack others and, although it is not clear that they share the ability of zombies to live without food, they still outlive their prey by considerable amounts of time, lying dormant until disturbed by the signs of the uninfected living. Like zombies, they do not attack each other. Yet the 'zombies' of the *28* films have none of the comedic elements of Romero's: they

do not appear hypnotised or stumble about incongruously. On the contrary, they run extremely, shockingly fast, roaring and hissing loudly; they are more powerful than their human counterparts, superhuman in their physical abilities rather than the sub-human zombies of Romero's creations. In the sequel film, *28 Weeks Later*, the main zombie, played by Robert Carlyle, hunts down his family members one by one, demonstrating a disturbing form of memory and reversal of Oedipal desire that Romero's zombies are still very far from. Our monsters tell us about ourselves. The Rage Virus and the nonhumans it creates literally embody fears about scientific experimentation, the secrecy surrounding it and the ethical ambivalence this may hide. The film plays upon the perception that societal violence is increasing, especially against strangers, as evidenced by new categories of crime such as 'road rage'. In the opening scenes of *28 Days*, one of the monkeys is being subjected to images of riots, fires and fighting on a panoply of screens surrounding its pinned-down body, drawing upon the suspicion that violent audio-visual images have an effect upon our psyches and behaviour. While these might not be 'zombies' in the traditional sense, it is the zombie genre and the figure of the zombie that the *28* films are closest to and borrow from most extensively.

Despite this advanced shift in the constitution of the zombie, Romero's most recent zombie movie, *Diary of the Dead* (2007), does not develop the figure of the zombie any further, rejecting the speed the *28* films bequeath and reverting to the figure of the zombie as seen in his earlier films, before they began to show signs of memory and consciousness. What remains from *Land of the Dead*, however, is that once the zombie plague is unleashed (its genesis remains, yet again, unexplained) whoever dies, from any cause, natural or zombie, is at risk of zombie reanimation. As Deborah, *Diary of the Dead*'s lead actor, articulates despairingly, '[e]veryone who dies, unless they get a bullet in the head, is going to come back and try to kill someone else'. The plague is within each person; previously dormant, it has now mysteriously begun to be activated by their death in what, at the beginning of the epidemic, official sources such as the Centre for Disease Control (CDC) speculate could be an 'unknown viral strain that leads to a kind of mass psychosis'. The result is a murderous mess blurring the lines between life and death, friend and foe. Deborah's boyfriend, Jason, watching on the Internet what amounts to a snuff home movie of humans killing other humans for keeping zombies 'alive', muses, 'it used to be us against us but now its us against them', whereupon Deborah's voice-over adds '[h]e was right, us against them. Except they *are* us'.

Diary of the Dead is set in a present saturated with screens and the high-speed availability of information through informal and amateur channels such as Internet blogs and sites where videos can be uploaded and downloaded. It begins with a group of film students making a horror movie when they hear on the radio the news of the walking dead attacking the living. Jason Creed, cameraman, decides to film what he sees: in the first case, the reactions of his friends and then, as the epidemic spreads and they move across the country, the zombie encounters they have. The film we are presented with is purportedly the edited version, called 'The Death of Death', drawn from Jason's camera work and that of another camera they find along the way. As the news programmes tell of the zombie outbreak but fudge the facts, as later on these institutional channels of information fall quiet, as the students confront increasingly dangerous and alarming scenes, Jason films their actions, reactions, arguments and grief, then edits the material and uploads it onto the Internet. The film is framed by the intermittent voice-over of Jason's girlfriend, Deborah. Her laconic, slow, almost hypnotic monotone comments upon the scenes and poses questions about the ethics of filming 'real life' events of people dying and in distress, the desire to look and what the effect is of seeing such scenes. She analyses Jason's changed relationship to the camera, while the film itself includes footage of their arguments about his compulsion to continue shooting and whether it is more important to aid or to document. Jason's fellow students are obviously uncomfortable with his intrusive and incessant filming; on several occasions Deborah sarcastically challenges Jason, asking '[i]f it's not on camera, it's like it hasn't happened, right?' Yet in the end she films too, she too becomes concerned to get the right shot, finally managing to do both as she films (shoots) herself shooting her zombie-bitten boyfriend, who insists his death (shooting) should be filmed (shot). Jason 'shoots' the zombie with a camera just before Deborah shoots him (see Figure 7.2). This punning on the American similarity of the two meanings of 'shoot' is pervasive throughout the film: at one point the film Professor who accompanies them hands a gun to Tony, one of the students, commenting, '[t]ake this. It's too easy to use', a line repeated only moments later by an angry Deborah as she hands a camera to the professor.

28 Days, with its screen-oppressed monkey, and the film students of *Diary of the Dead* self-consciously allude to the notion that violent screen images may be damaging to those exposed to them. Obviously, though, both films are simultaneously purveyors of the very screen violence that they purport to critique, in moves which could be interpreted

Figure 7.2 Jason, from *Diary of the Dead*, filming the zombie who will bite him, filmed by Deborah, who will shoot him.

along differing lines as immanent criticism, cynical exploitation or plain disavowal of recent and commonplace media fears. Shortly after *Diary of the Dead* shows us the confrontation with her zombified family, Deborah's voice-over cuts in:

> It's strange how looking at things – seeing things – through a lens, a glass, rose-coloured or shaded black, you become immune. You're supposed to be affected but you're not. I used to think it was just you out there, the viewers, but it's not, it's us as well, the shooters. We become immune too, inoculated, so that whatever happens around us, no matter how horrible it is, we wind up taking it in our stride, just another day, just another death.

On the one hand, the film enjoins us to agree with her: the students do indeed become increasingly inured to the horror of their situation, increasingly obsessed by filming it. Accordingly, at the end there is a mirroring of the 'fake' horror film which the students were making as *Diary of the Dead* begun within the 'real' film they are now experiencing. This time the 'mummy' from the fake film has become a zombie, filmed dispassionately by Jason as it chases Tracy, another student, who flees in

exactly the same way, even the same dress, as she did in the 'take' they were filming in the woods. The repetition of this moment is deliberately comic, not least because the mummy was reprimanded in the take for running too quickly whereas as a zombie he is appropriately slow and stumbling, which Jason, filming, notes with approval: the living dead Ridley is far better for film. The humour of the scene, its deliberate referentiality, as well as Jason's concern to continue filming despite the danger to one of his friends, contribute to the picture of a group who are no longer affected by what they see other than to judge whether it will make a good 'shot' or not: their ability to tell movie from reality, simulated danger from that which is life-threatening, has atrophied. They have become entranced by their own screen production and identify too strongly with the camera and its point of view, which dissociates them from the 'real' human crises around them. The suggestion is that this would be the inevitable outcome of our own behaviour in a like crisis; that the cinema viewer is not so very dissimilar to these students. Yet, on another level, the viewer has to resist assenting to Deborah's statement: to be truly 'immune' in such a way is to lose one's humanity and one's compassion; while that is the role Jason fulfils, the artificiality of the mummy scene is unconvincing, its 'repetition' too convenient and *Diary of the Dead* is ambivalent about Jason and Deborah's desire to record, showing the tensions it creates within the group.

Deborah's observation draws a parallel between the lack of affect felt by the person filming horror and that of someone viewing it. Yet, it is *Diary of the Dead*'s relentless preoccupation with cameras, film and shooting which is responsible for its lack of affect, as well as demonstrating how the group, or at least some of its members, are dissociated from what they experience by the lens that intervenes. This productively indicates what it is about zombie films and horror more generally that keeps its spectators in thrall. The 'unreality' of *Diary of the Dead* is underscored by continually drawing attention to its filmic construction, the limitations of this and the potential for 'drama', for a good 'shot'. Thus the viewers, as audience, are paradoxically removed from the horror the film might induce precisely because, through constantly remarking upon itself as a piece of filming, *Diary of the Dead* undermines the suspension of disbelief that allows a zombie film to have affect. This happens in several ways, most prominently through the use of the voice-over, often over a slowed sequence of shots or some retrospective footage that follows a moment of drama or tension, attack or confrontation. Even more disruptive is the 'presence' of the camera, which tends to be foregrounded. For instance, in the first close encounter between

the group and zombies, in a hospital, the 'scene' is made more difficult to view and thus to engage with because the camera needs recharging. The battery light flashes on screen and at points the screen itself blanks out. The result is that the viewer is hyper-aware of the mediated, 'filmed' nature of what they are seeing: it does not feel 'real' because realism is achieved in film through the effacement of the camera's presence or, alternatively, through the documentary mode. *Diary of the Dead* draws upon the latter heavily, but the genre is now familiar as a deliberately manipulative construction of 'real' horror from films such as *The Blair Witch Project* (1999). If viewers are 'inoculated' or 'immune' it is through the film's own blocking of affect, which withholds or disrupts identification and does not allow the uninterrupted continuity of the hypnotic relation needed for viewer 'belief' in zombies to be palpable for the duration of the feature. The identification of the students with the camera replaces that usually established by the cinema viewer.

The internal screen of which Žižek speaks, the imaginative possibilities of suggestion which films drawn upon and play with, lack their usual power in *Diary of the Dead* because the presence of that power is being highlighted. The hypnotic relation between film and viewer, screen and imagination, is eroded through constant interruptions, through the repeated reminder that we are viewers, watching a film. The immunity or inoculation, then, is that of being a viewer aware of the viewing that is being undertaken, aware of the artificiality of the scene in front of them. Deborah's comment casts cinemas as safe spaces, an opinion parodied in *Diary of the Dead* through the panic 'viewing' room where Deborah, Tony and the Professor eventually retreat. This security centre at the heart of a vast mansion is protected by thick metal walls and doors; from inside, surrounded by screens, they can watch the zombies wandering about the house and the grounds, captured on security CCTV. At the end of the film these remaining three are safe, screen-surrounded but essentially trapped: like the cinema viewers watching *Diary of the Dead*, they can view the zombies on the screen from a safe distance. Yet within the horror genre, any suggestion of an ultimate 'safe haven' is usually shown to be a fantasy, if not in this film, then in the next, as Romero's repeated return to the zombie movie confirms.

The increasing cerebral capacities of zombies, excluding the reversion staged by *Diary of the Dead*, finds its apogee in the recent film *Otto; or Up with Dead People* (2008), written and directed by Bruce LaBruce. Otto is a zombie far more advanced than his previous screen siblings: he can speak to and understand humans; possesses vague but increasingly clear and returning memories of 'the time before'; he has desires, not just for

food but also for sex. In introducing Otto and his zombieism, Medea, the amateur film director whose zombie film Otto will eventually star in, suggests that his state is perhaps 'just a metaphor'. Her film, which we see sections of during its making, uses zombies as a metaphor for homosexuality, staging a 'gay plague': male zombies pick up other gay men, seduce them, turn them, and thus recruit them to their gay zombie army. *Otto* is, in part, a comedy, one with a rye take on the history of homosexuality's reception, practices, partial acceptance and inevitable stereotypes, as well as remarking upon how very seriously amateur and avant-garde film-makers can take themselves and their work. Otto's zombieism is interpreted differently by those around him: Medea likes to see it as an extreme form of protest against 'a noxious system' of consumerism whereby consumer behaviour itself is zombifying and 'a person who functions normally in a sick society is himself sick'. For Medea, then, Otto's condition represents the performance of a 'healthy', if unusual, response to the sickness of contemporary society and its values. She also, in her own film, links zombie infection to homosexuality and to HIV – so often called the gay plague – and thus more widely to stigmatised, ostracised outsider groups. It is clear that those Otto works alongside do not actually believe him: Medea sees his conviction that he is a zombie as fundamentally a 'fantasy'; Fritz, a fellow actor, characterises Otto as having 'an eating disorder', 'schizophrenia' and as potentially 'psychotic', all very contemporary mental health classifications. On the one hand, LaBruce makes zombies a form of modern malaise, metaphorical and exceptionally different to their predecessors; on the other, he emphasises and logically extends some common elements of the zombie figure: their otherness, their (post)modernity, their outsider status and, perhaps surprisingly, their lurking libidinal potentiality.

The obligatory gory feasting scenes in conventional zombie films, where groups of the undead messily munch on newly eviscerated body parts and innards with spellbound concentration, has its carnal sensuality thoroughly sexualised in Medea's film-within-a-film, which stages it as an explicit gay orgy. The homosexual zombies tend to eat each other and then sexually penetrate the wounds they have created; in some scenes this is a loving act, in others a penile and intestinal melange of bodies and body parts that also highlights the way in which porn often 'dismembers' its subjects through the use of close up shots. The latent sexualised undertones of the zombie figure, its 'embrace' and killing kiss which wins its victim to the other side, is fully extrapolated: at one point in Medea's film, Fritz smokes a cigarette, in post-coital parody, as he waits for his recently embraced victim to awaken into

zombieism. Otto's 'real' zombieism is related to his sexuality too: when the film begins he is a lost figure, searching for something he cannot name, unable to devour human flesh and so forced to live off animal roadkill. After a sexual encounter with another man, ending in blood and gratitude, Otto has more frequent flashbacks to the 'time before' in which he and a boyfriend are having fun: Otto is, and was, gay. As the film continues and more of Otto's memories return, his zombieism appears to be a strange form of mourning, or what Freud would call melancholia, the inability to give up the lost object; he is suffering from his unacknowledged grief over the termination of the relationship he valued and which he is now beginning to recall. Eventually he meets his old partner who blames the break up on Otto's 'illness', the schizophrenia that landed him in a 'loony bin', as they refer to it. Self-diagnosing as a zombie, Otto has been deemed by others he encounters, including medical professionals, as mentally ill and yet the film persistently links his zombieism to his previous relationship and to his sexuality. After being beaten up, Otto is looked after by Fritz, whose tenderness leads to a gentle love scene between the two men. During this sexual encounter there are shots where Otto is clean and resembles the self he is in his memories of 'the time before', as though this intimate sexual experience is helping him to readjust to healthiness, come to terms with his loss, find new meaning in life and perhaps new love. However, the film ultimately resists this happy conclusion, closing instead with Otto telling Medea petulantly, 'I'm dead. I don't *think* I'm dead. I'm *dead*', before leaving town and his new friends to lurch off into the countryside and contemplate suicide. Delivering the final words of the film, he asks rhetorically, '[h]ow do you kill yourself if you are already dead?' The viewer is left to decide whether Otto is one of the undead, a true zombie, or just 'dead' in a metaphorical and thoroughly modern sense.

Otto's blank stare is not so much empty as it is an exteriorising of a damaged interiority: his deadness, inside, translates into a dissociation from his surroundings and from emotional situations. In this respect, it is his focus upon himself, his fascination with his fragmented memories and his grief that give him the look of one hypnotised. In a scene on a train this becomes very clear, as Otto looks at others and sees them either as disfigured by the grave or as playing out his old memories of himself and his lover, while they see him as a bored, unpleasantly smelly, vacant-eyed youth. The hypnotised zombie is interchangeably the disaffected and dissociated young man of today.

Otto is a fitting film to usher in the close of *Legacies of Plague*: it brings together many of the plague uses that have been discussed here, such

as discrimination, HIV, gay relationships, zombieism and the nature of filmic spectatorship. Moreover, it adds a category which up until this point has not explicitly surfaced but is ripe with unpleasant consequences for thinking about mental illness, one hinted at by the Rage Virus, and the 'mass psychosis' that is initially proposed as a reason for the zombie epidemic by the authorities in *Diary of the Dead*. The zombieism in these films, even Romero's, is consonant with aspects of human behaviour, taken to their extreme edges or most tragic extents, from which there is no return. The plague that Romero's zombies spread and the Rage Virus in the *28* films are irreversible, as is Otto's zombieism. Unlike most diseases, even those created in the thriller epidemic films where there is often a race for a vaccine or antidote, these plagues are incurable: once the threshold has been crossed from the human to the infected, there is no medicine, no return, no recourse. In the traditional zombie genre, which *Otto* remains outside, between the infected and the uninfected there can be no mutual recognition, the precondition posited by the philosopher Hegel for two consciousnesses to stop antagonisms before one annihilates the other. The humans may recognise their loved ones in the faces and dress of the infected, but the infected – even in *28 Weeks Later*, when they are perhaps the most 'advanced' of zombies – only desire to kill the healthy and the living. The paradox of these infections is that their success, if ever it were to be eventually achieved, involves their demise: without the living to feed from, zombies are meaningless; the Rage Virus would die out after the last uninfected human was turned. Like their medical predecessor, the imaginary screen plagues of Romero's films and the *28* series logically contain the seeds of their own exhaustion. *Otto* renders the existential doubt of one character, but most zombie films focus upon the relationships between the living group and how their behaviour is challenged and changed by the zombies they encounter.

The French psychologist Gustave Le Bon and Freud argue that suggestion and transference are at the root of the group relation, which constitutes a form of human-to-human contagion. Films exhibiting this contagious relation in the form of zombie infection inevitably explore group dynamics. Firstly, they usually set two groups, the living and the undead, in battle against one another: the one a supposedly civilised, human form of group; the other a taboo-breaking inhumane mass, a grotesque mirrored double, the dark and murderous underbelly of the infectious group relation. It is this dividing line which becomes ever more precarious as Romero's oeuvre develops, up until *Diary of the Dead* reintroduces the earlier, less complex zombie. Moreover, zombie films

also explore the group relation as it is played out within the living: *Night of the Living Dead* portrays the power struggle for authority between Ben and Harry Cooper; *Land of the Dead* features two vigilantes, originally working together, falling out over ethics and money; the bewildered college students in *Diary of the Dead* bicker continually. While in *Night of the Living Dead* the group of zombies and the humans they fight in the farmhouse are all destroyed, Romero's other zombie films have preserved a handful of humans. In *Land of the Dead*, despite the pervasive parasitism, survival is for those who fight on behalf of others, whether living or undead: Riley and his friends, but also their enemy-who-is-not-quite-other, the black zombie petrol pump attendant. *Diary of the Dead*, too, does not kill all its human cast but is less hopeful, entombing its survivors in front of live screens where they can watch the encroachment of the living dead.

Von Trier's *Epidemic*, Romero's *Diary of the Dead* and LaBruce's *Otto*: three films dealing with plague that also contain films-within-films and expressly address the relationship between plague and the cinematic. Both *Diary of the Dead* and *Otto* have film-viewing moments where the cast watch each other, whether as they edit images they have shot and watch zombies on CCTV, as in the former, or whether they sit in a row and view Medea's previous 'art' films. During this scene in *Otto* the camera pans along the faces of the viewers, all transfixed, looking hypnotised, with Otto in the middle, watching with dead but intense vacancy. We are quite obviously being given a version of ourselves as viewers of Medea's work. If the zombie horde is an infectious, dangerous, occasionally comical, double of the human group they desire to consume and incorporate, they are also the double of the transfixed film audience who follow their antics as though they too are hypnotised. 'I *am* hoping to scare you', *Diary of the Dead*'s Deborah explains at the beginning of the film, 'so that maybe you'll wake up', as though we are indeed hypnotic subjects locked in a screen trance.

The plague of fantasies played out on the screen, while the internal screen of zombie fans is temporarily suspended or supplemented, is perhaps one of the oldest stories: that of two warring groups. As Freud argues in *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, identification is at heart ambivalent, an originally hostile tie translated, crossed over, into an affectionate bond. The hostility between the infectious undead and the uncontaminated living stage the reversal of this at the point when the loved one becomes bitten, turns and has to be killed to maintain the purity of the living group. Horror critics like Pinedo see in the zombie film the return of the repressed of the everyday: our fears of death,

disease and the potential powerlessness of human agency against the irrational. Zombies achieve this through their figuration of infectious plague, their hypnotised and glazed gaze, the exposure of the raw reality of the death and life instincts untempered by rational thought and the lack of individuation revealed in their representation of the group relation. Yet the power of imaginative suggestion within the hypnotic relation which von Trier's *Epidemic* explores in conjunction with plague, presents a further – and more disturbing – possibility, one that recalls Artaud's conception of plague as a psychic entity and which chimes with Otto's malaise in LaBruce's film. What the screen essentially veils is that plague can still imaginatively infect us and that its seed of infection, like the disease in *Land of the Dead*, *Diary of the Dead* and, differently, in *Otto*, may not reside only in the externally screened monster but also inside ourselves. Within the 'safety' of the zombie genre, many will die, but some of the living will always avoid the plague; however bleak their chances of further survival look, the Hollywood zombie movie has yet to annihilate all human life at the end of a film, maintaining the availability of a safe and satisfying triumph of the spectator over the spectacle. The endurance of the zombies and the plague they carry needs humans to survive. While there is life, there is plague to prey upon it.

From 1722, when Defoe published *A Journal of the Plague Year*, through to Bruce LaBruce's *Otto; or Up with Dead People* in 2008, this study has traced the legacies of plague in narrative, theatre, psychoanalysis, political discourse and film. Plague remains a virulent metaphor: a powerful and historically lethal way of labelling enemies and outsiders, a disturbing vector for our fears surrounding the fragility of the social bond, and a puissant figuration of the conceptual and psychic infectiousness at work within psychoanalytic thinking and its reception. Plague's impact upon our cultural imagination in the West across a range of discourses and its embodiment in a variety of artistic forms is undeniable. But plague is also considered to be a very real bioterrorist threat by authorities in Britain and the US. Its presence in Iraqi laboratories, along with other agents suitable for biological weapons development, was cited in the now infamous September dossier of 2002 which laid out the British position on the question of whether Iraq had weapons of mass destruction and provided the justification for going to war.[19] Plague as a weapon has its legacy: during the siege of Kaffa, in 1346, plague victims' bodies were thrown over the walls into the city by the Muslim army in an attempt to spread the disease from the troops suffering without to the besieged citizens trapped within.[20]

As recently as July 1997, a laboratory technician named Larry W. Harris was indicted in the US for obtaining the *Yersinia Pestis* bacteria by fraud; after the examination of the long-standing association of plague with the Jews in Chapter 5, it is no surprise to learn that the police found at his home racist and anti-Semitic literature, as well as his membership card for a white supremacist organisation.[21] The kind of emotional and behavioural disturbance caused by the Rage Virus, by Otto's struggles and by the dissociation of the hypnotic state suggests that the zombie figures our fears about what constitutes the human, and, increasingly, what may threaten that in terms of viruses, traumas and bio-medical or genetic alterations. This will also always raise fears about who tries to control plague and who administers cures. If plague ever returns as an epidemic reality, it is likely to be in the form of a weapon. Until then, its presence in the West remains textual, metaphoric and filmic, yet as *Legacies of Plague* has demonstrated, while it may not threaten us medically, it certainly 'ain't dead'.

Notes

Introduction

1. The World Health Organization keeps track of disease outbreaks and provides regular updates and medical information on their website. A fascinating website resource is provided by Health Map, which combines disparate sources of information to create a picture of the outbreaks of infectious diseases worldwide. It is possible to sort by disease. For example, over a 30-day period in the autumn of 2006, 4 people were infected with plague in the US; 34 died in the Congo; 6 died in Uganda; and an emergency dry run of an infectious disease outbreak modelled on plague took place in Kent, UK, on 19 October. See C. Feifeld and J. Brownstein (2006), *Healthmap: Global Disease Alert Mapping System*, http://healthmap.org/, accessed 22 October 2006.
2. See, for example, J. T. Queenan (2003) 'Smoking: The Cloudy, Smelly Plague', *Obstetrics and Gynaecology*, 102.5, 893–4. For Islamofascism as plague, a Google search results in multiple blog entries.
3. S. Sontag (1988) *Illness as Metaphor* (London: Penguin), p. 10. Page references for all texts are provided in parentheses, where clear, after the first citation.
4. M. Foucault (1999) *Abnormal: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1974–1975*, trans. G. Burchell (New York: Picador), pp. 44–7.
5. Foucault's series of *Abnormal* lectures traces the shifting exercise of power through observation and the normalisation of a population's illnesses, focusing specifically, in the later lectures, upon sexuality. The beginnings of this type of knowledge he locates in the newly emergent systemisation of observation developed in Europe during plague epidemics. This is dealt with in Lecture 2, 15 January 1975. Foucault, *Abnormal*, pp. 31–54.
6. I am using 'prehistory' here to write of the ancient Greek and other early reactions to plague. In days when diagnoses were often loose and medicine followed different models, 'plague' was used to refer to various epidemic outbreaks which we would now recognise as caused by distinct and different diseases. In fact, it is generally agreed that the symptoms of the 'Great Plague' Thucydides writes of in Athens (430 BC) are not consistent with any disease we now know. See A. Karlen (1996) *Plague's Progress: A Social History of Man and Disease* (London: Indigo), pp. 59–60; and H. Zinsser (1963) *Rats, Lice and History: The Biography of a Bacillus* (Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown and Company), p. 122.
7. Defoe says of the plague pits 'for here was no Difference made, but Poor and Rich went together; there was no other way of Burials'. D. Defoe (1969) *A Journal of the Plague Year*, ed. Louis Landa (London and New York: Oxford University Press), p. 62.
8. For a recent incarnation of plague as Avian Flu, see the interactive creation 'Pandemic Rooms' by Jason Nelson, part of a project entitled 'The Plague of Language' by the online art collective Dispatx. J. Nelson (2006) 'Pandemic Rooms', *Dispatx Art Collective*, http://www.dispatx.com/issue/05/en/pandemicrooms/01.html, accessed 19 November 2006.

9. For example, see T. Dormandy (1999) *The White Death: A History of Tuberculosis* (London and Rio Grande: The Hambledon Press); J. Arrizabalaga, J. Henderson and R. French (1997) *The Great Pox: Syphilis and Its Antecedents in Early Modern Europe* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press); M. Healy (2001) *Fictions of Disease in Early Modern England: Bodies, Plagues and Politics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan); S. Sontag (1990) *AIDS and Its Metaphors* (London: Penguin).
10. J. A. Banner (2005) *The Ancient Hebrew Lexicon of the Bible* (Texas: Virtualbookworm.com Publishing), p. 374.
11. See the Ancient Hebrew Research Center Website for details of these pictographs and to trace their relation to modern Hebrew and other scripts. J. A. Banner (2006) 'Reconstruction of the Ancient Hebrew Alphabet', *Ancient Hebrew Research Center*, http://www.ancient-hebrew.org/4_alphabet_01.html, accessed 19 November 2006.
12. Genesis 12:17 marks the first appearance of plague; examples in Exodus include 9:4, 11:1, 12:13 and 32:35. The use of plague in Leviticus revolves around the treatments prescribed for leprosy, plague and skin diseases, and they run throughout. Plague makes its final entrance in the Bible at the very end, in the last chapter and very nearly the last verse, Revelation 22:18. In the King James Bible there are overall 107 references to plague.
13. J. A. Simpson and E. S. C. Weiner, (eds and comps) (1989) *The Oxford English Dictionary, Vol. XI: Ow-Poisant*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Clarendon Press), pp. 948–9 for 'plague' and p. 624 for 'pestilence'.
14. See the online dictionary results for 'plague' through the *Translatum* website (2001–2006), which directs searches through *Foreignword.com: The Language Site*, http://www.foreignword.com/Tools/dictsrch.htm, accessed 19 November 2006. Results are from The New Testament Greek Lexicon. Also see results for 'plague' through the Ancient Greek resources available at: G. R. Crane (ed.) (2006), *Perseus Digital Library Project*, Tufts University, http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/, accessed 19 November 2006. This website cross-references through works of ancient literature and provides 25 different Greek words and word-derivations for plague.
15. See, for example, S. Scott and C. Duncan (2004) *Return of the Black Death: The World's Greatest Serial Killer* (West Sussex: John Wiley and Sons Ltd).
16. P. de Man (1979) *Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke, and Proust* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press), p. 146.
17. J. Derrida (2004) *Dissemination*, trans. B. Johnson (London and New York: Continuum,), p. 149.
18. L. Edelman (1989) 'The Plague of Discourse: Politics, Literary Theory, and AIDS', *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, 88.1, p. 307.
19. M. Blanchot (1995) *The Writing of the Disaster*, trans. A. Smock (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press), p. 87.
20. Healy, *Fictions of Disease*, pp. 67–8.
21. D. Steel (1981) 'Plague Writing: From Boccaccio to Camus', *Journal of European Studies*, II, p. 89.
22. B. Faas Leavy (1992) *To Blight With Plague: Studies in a Literary Theme* (New York and London: New York University Press), p. 3.
23. E. Gomel (2000) 'The Plague of Utopias: Pestilence and the Apocalyptic Body', *Twentieth Century Literature*, 46.4, p. 409.

24. R. Girard (1973–4) 'The Plague in Myth and Literature', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 15.5, p. 840.
25. Girard notes how in Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, Raskolnikov dreams of a plague-ravaged world and how Thomas Mann's Aschenbach, in *Death in Venice*, dreams of a sacrificial bacchanal the night before he dies of the cholera which is raging through Venice. Girard, 'The Plague in Literature and Myth', pp. 835–6 and 847–8 respectively.
26. Defoe, *Journal of the Plague Year*, p. 91. For reasons of style and clarity, the title of the Introduction has used the more common 'ain't' instead of the archaic 'an't' of Defoe.

1 Writing Plague: Defoe and Camus

1. E. Dickinson (1993) 'A Word Dropped Careless on a Page', *Poems*, ed. Peter Washington (London: David Campbell Publishers Ltd), p. 31.
2. W. Burroughs (1981) *Cities of the Red Night* (London: Picador), p. 35.
3. D. Steel (1981) 'Plague Writing: From Boccaccio to Camus', *Journal of European Studies*, II, p. 90.
4. D. Defoe (1969) *A Journal of the Plague Year*, ed. L. Landa (London: Oxford University Press), p. 8. All references to texts referred to regularly will be given parenthetically where clear.
5. A. Camus (2001) *The Plague*, trans. R. Buss (London, Penguin Books), p. 138. When I give the French, it is taken from A. Camus (1947) *La Peste* (Paris: Gallimard). French page numbers will follow their English counterparts, after a forward slash.
6. R. Stephenson (1982–3) '"'Tis a speaking Sight": Imagery as Narrative Technique in Defoe's *A Journal of the Plague Year*', *Dalhousie Review*, 62, p. 686. Tolstoy's theory of art as infection bears important relevance here. For Tolstoy, art can transmit the feelings of the artist and through this the artist can infect his fellow man. He writes: 'Art is a human activity consisting in this, that one man consciously, by means of certain external signs, hands on to others feelings he has lived through, and that other people are infected by these feelings and also experience them', L. Tolstoy (1982) *What is Art?*, trans. A. Maude (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Educational Publishing), p. 51 and throughout. The problem with Tolstoy's conception is that it is extremely narrow: he disallows many different narrative effects, such as borrowing, realism and creating striking imagery, which would rule most plague narratives out of his schema for infectious art. Primarily, he is interested in art as a stimulus for religious reflection. Throughout this text, *What is Art?* (1896), he uses the terms 'infectious' and 'infect' to speak of art that he condones.
7. J. Thomas, 'Introduction', in J. Thomas, D. Thomas and T. Hazuka, (eds) (1992) *Flash Fiction: Very Short Stories* (London: W. W. Norton and Company), pp. 11–14.
8. S. Freud, (1990) 'Fragment of An Analysis of A Case of Hysteria (1905)', *Case Histories I, PFL 8*, ed. J. Strachey, trans. J. Strachey and A. Strachey (London: Penguin), p. 46.
9. S. Marcus (1984) *Freud and the Culture of Psychoanalysis: Studies in the Transition from Victorian Humanism to Modernity* (Boston: George Allen & Unwin), p. 61.

10. E. Gomel (2000) 'The Plague of Utopias: Pestilence and the Apocalyptic Body', *Twentieth Century Literature*, 46.4, pp. 409–10.
11. S. Thomas (2000) 'The Ends of the Fragment, the Problem of the Preface: Proliferation and Finality in *The Last Man*', in M. Eberle-Sinatra (ed.) *Mary Shelley's Fictions: From Frankenstein to Faulkner* (London: Macmillan), p. 23.
12. D. Defoe (1925) *Serious Reflections During the Life and Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe with his Vision of the Angelick World* (London: Constable & Company Ltd).
13. For Ashbery's poem, which speaks of aging and death, see J. Ashbery (1985) 'Saying it to Keep it From Happening', *Selected Poems* (London and New York: Penguin Books), p. 226.
14. For Derrida's elaboration of autoimmunity see J. Derrida (2005) *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason*, trans. P-A. Brault and M. Naas (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press), pp. 35–6 and pp. 45–55 in particular. Also see the interview with Derrida dedicated to this topic: 'Autoimmunity: Real and Symbolic Suicides', trans. P-A. Brault and M. Naas in Giovanni Borradori (2003) *Philosophy in a Time of Terror: Dialogues with Jacques Derrida and Jürgen Habermas* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press), pp. 85–136. Derrida's concept of autoimmunity is discussed in relation to political discourse in Chapter 5.
15. The early publication of a part of the novel in *Combat* is mentioned by Shoshana Felman and in a letter from Camus to Roland Barthes. See S. Felman (1992) 'Camus' *The Plague*, or a Monument to Witnessing', in S. Felman and D. Laub *Testimony: Crisis of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History* (New York and London: Routledge), p. 98; and A. Camus (1979) *Selected Essays and Notebooks*, ed. and trans. P. Thody (London: Penguin), p. 220.
16. A. Camus (1958) 'Author's Preface', *Caligula and Three Other Plays*, trans. S. Gilbert (New York: Vintage Books), p. ix.
17. As the following discussion will make clear, Camus and many of his readers saw the novel as an analogy of certain events in the Second World War, but it has not been made specifically obvious anywhere in *The Plague*.
18. The flea carries plague from the infected rat to infect the human: it is the 'vector' through which infected blood passes from one to the other.
19. Defoe, *Serious Reflections*, p. viii.
20. W. H. Ainsworth (1841) *Old St. Paul's: A Tale of the Plague and the Fire* (London: George Routledge and Sons).
21. M. Shelley (1993) *The Last Man*, ed. H. J. Luke, Jr. (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press), p. 193.
22. This is obvious from an earlier mention of Defoe coupled with that of 'the masterly delineations of the author of Arthur Mervyn' to which the characters in *The Last Man* refer for descriptions of a pestilence they are shortly to experience. See Shelley, *The Last Man*, p. 187.
23. See Chapter 2 for a discussion of these texts.
24. The death-cart scene is not confined to these examples alone. Alessandro Manzoni, for instance, has his romantic protagonist, Renzo, escape from a mob by catching a ride with Milan's death-carts, which the people are afraid to approach. See A. Manzoni (1972) *The Betrothed*, trans. B. Penman (London: Penguin), pp. 644–8. In *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* (1975), the plague scene is near the beginning. The death-cart is going through the

town with the familiar cry of 'bring out your dead', accompanied by the clang of an enormous percussion triangle. A man brings out a 'corpse' who then objects, saying he is still alive. After a little wrangling with the man in charge of the cart, the 'corpse' is bonked on the head and piled in.

25. M. Serres (1982) *The Parasite*, trans. L. R. Schehr (London and Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press), p. 110.
26. W. Nicholson (1966) *The Historical Sources of Defoe's Journal of the Plague Year* (New York: Kennikat Press), p. 3.
27. M. Healy (2003) 'Defoe's *Journal* and the English Plague Writing Tradition', *Literature and Medicine*, 22.1, p. 27.
28. R. Stephenson (1987) 'The Plague Narratives of Defoe and Camus', *Modern Language Quarterly*, 48, pp. 228–9.
29. The nursery rhyme is thought to date from the time of the Black Death: the 'Rosie' being the red lesion or token; the Posy the bag of herbs commonly worn to ward off plague; the sneezing betraying the respiratory symptoms of pneumonic plague; the 'All fall down' being obvious. See: A. L. Moote and D. C. Moote (2004) *The Great Plague: The Story of London's Most Deadly Year* (London and Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press), p. 7.
30. A good description of these three types of plague is provided by Belinda Hollyer in her 'Introduction' to W. G. Bell (2001) *The Great Plague in London*, ed. B. Hollyer (London: The Folio Society), pp. xiii–xviii.
31. H. Cixous (1993) *Three Steps on the Ladder of Writing*, trans. S. Cornell and S. Sellers (New York: Columbia University Press), p. 32.
32. A. Camus (1966) *Carnets 1942–1951*, trans. P. Thody (London: Hamish Hamilton).
33. O. Todd (1997) *Albert Camus: A Life*, trans. B. Ivry (London: Chatto and Windus), p. 229.
34. Freud talks of imitation as mental infection in relation to a group of schoolgirls in a boarding school. This is discussed at greater length in Chapter 6. See S. Freud (1991) 'Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego' (1921), *Civilization, Society and Religion*, *PFL Vol. 12*, ed. and trans. J. Strachey (London: Penguin), pp. 91–178. Chapter 3 will establish that the example is infectious.
35. As Shoshana Felman notes, there is one character who Rieux decides he cannot speak for: Cottard, who has committed a crime before the epidemic and is relieved to find that during the outbreak the authorities drop the investigation into his case. Rieux quotes Tarrou, who had said of Cottard, '[h]is only true crime is to have given approval in his heart to something that kills men, women and children' (233). Approval of mass extermination, this suggests, would require a different order of narrative testimony and witnessing. See S. Felman, 'Camus' *The Plague*, or a Monument to Witnessing', *Testimony*, pp. 118–9. Felman explores this in a further essay in the *Testimony* collection entitled 'Camus' *The Fall*, or the Betrayal of the Witness', in *Testimony*, pp. 165–203.
36. Primo Levi uses the device of 'we' and 'our' in his descriptions of the concentration camp and experiences of the Jews in *If this is a Man and The Truce*. In the latter text he refers to the War as 'the pestilence which had prostrated Europe'. P. Levi (2006) *If this is a Man and The Truce*, trans. S. Woolf (London: Little, Brown Book Company), p. 293.

37. Camus, *Selected Essays and Notebooks*, p. 220.
38. Felman does, however, raise this question in a different essay in the same collection: 'Was *The Plague*, *The Fall* seems now to ask, essentially a *rescue operation*, as it once had seemed to be? Was the trauma of the inhumanity of the occurrence a *disease* – a simple stroke of history – from which we can now simply be *cured*?', Felman, 'The Betrayal of the Witness', *Testimony*, pp. 176–7.
39. For an interesting example of how eyewitness accounts and historical fact can be uncomfortably different, and for a discussion which concludes that the eyewitness account has its place and validity despite this, see D. Laub (1992) 'Bearing Witness, or the Vicissitudes of Listening', in S. Felman and D. Laub, *Testimony: Crises in Witnessing*, pp. 59–63.

2 The Politics of Plague Theatre: Artaud, Čapek and Camus

1. Boccaccio (1995) *The Decameron*, 2nd edn, trans. G. H. McWilliam (London: Penguin), p. 13. Throughout, all page references will be given in the text after the first citation, where this is clear.
2. M. Healy (2001) *Fictions of Disease in Early Modern England: Bodies, Plagues and Politics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan), p. 16.
3. M. Foucault (2003) 'Lecture Two: 15 January 1975', *Abnormal: Lectures at the Collège de France 1974–1975*, trans. G. Burchell (New York: Picador), p. 47.
4. Boccaccio, 'First Day: Introduction', *The Decameron*, p. 7. For accounts of Europe's reaction to plague and the institution of plague regulations, see W. Naphy and A. Spicer (2000) 'Dancing with Death: Understanding and Regulating Plague 1400–1500', and 'The Circle of Death: Endemic Plague 1500–1700', *The Black Death and the History of Plagues, 1345–1730* (Gloucestershire: Tempus Publishing Limited), pp. 51–76 and pp. 77–102; P. Ziegler (2003) *The Black Death* (Gloucestershire: Sutton Publishing), pp. 38–9.
5. Elana Gomel notes an apocalyptic dream of plague, which she identifies in Nazi and neo-Nazi texts. It is when plague is featured as 'a "final solution," a decisive break with, and purification from, the past, ushering in a genocidal utopia'. E. Gomel (2000) 'The Plague of Utopias: Pestilence and the Apocalyptic Body,' *Twentieth Century Literature*, 46.4, p. 409. Although it is possible to read Artaud as using plague to 'purify', there is no firm conception of utopia invoked. Camus and Čapek feature plague, as dictatorship, in the way that Gomel describes, but it is a criticism not an endorsement, and therefore undercuts the idea of plague/dictatorship as a chiliastic cleansing to create a future race/society. Gomel's work in this essay has already been discussed in Chapter 1. Plague's motility, apparent in its ability to be taken up as a tool by fascists and anti-fascists alike, is discussed in Chapter 5.
6. It should be noted that the classical plays which include plague, notably Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* and Seneca's *Oedipus*, also do not directly represent plague or the plague-stricken upon the stage; instead these catastrophes are spoken of and described.
7. There are 98 uses of 'plague' in Shakespeare's texts; 14 of 'plagues' and 14 of 'pestilence'. The two plays which employ plague the most are *Timon of Athens* and *Henry IV Part I*. In the latter, it is mostly employed as a curse.

See M. Spevack (1970) *A Complete and Systematic Concordance to the Works of Shakespeare* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung), p. 2628 for 'plague' and p. 2616 for 'pestilence'.

8. F. Kermode (1997) 'Timon of Athens', *The Riverside Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, 2nd edn, eds G. Blakemore Evans and J. J. M. Tobin (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company), pp. 1489–92. All references to Shakespeare's works are from *The Riverside Shakespeare*.
9. This has been interpreted as making 'imaginable for future generations, the possibility of bioterrorism'. See L. F. Qualtiere and W. W. E. Slights (2003) 'Contagion and Blame in Early Modern England: The Case of the French Pox', *Literature and Medicine*, 22.1, p. 20.
10. The effect of plague upon theatres and theatre companies during Shakespeare's time is documented in F. P. Wilson (1963) *The Plague in Shakespeare's London* (Oxford: Clarendon Press), pp. 110–13 and pp. 124–8; L. Barroll (1991) 'Pestilence and the Players', *Politics, Plague, and Shakespeare's Theater: The Stuart Years* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press), pp. 70–116.
11. Qualtiere and Slights, 'Contagion and Blame in Early Modern England', p. 20.
12. Healy, *Fictions of Disease in early Modern England*, p. 124 and p. 152.
13. Healy, *Fictions of Disease in early Modern England*, p. 86.
14. M. Healy (2003) 'Defoe's *Journal* and the English Plague Writing Tradition', *Literature and Medicine*, 22.1, p. 38.
15. P. Ricoeur (1982) 'Metaphor and the Central Problem of Hermeneutics', *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, trans. J. B. Thompson (London: Cambridge University Press), p. 174.
16. A. Artaud (1958) 'The Theatre and the Plague', *Theatre and Its Double*, trans. M. C. Richards (New York: Grove Press), p. 18; and A. Artaud (1978) *Oeuvres Complètes IV* (Paris: Gallimard), p. 18. Where the French is given, the page number will follow that of the translation, separated by a forward slash.
17. T. Adorno (1977) 'Commitment!', trans. F. McDonagh in F. Jameson (ed.) *Aesthetics and Politics* (London: New Left Books), p. 180.
18. G. Baker (2003) 'Nietzsche, Artaud and Tragic Politics', *Comparative Literature*, 55.1, p. 2.
19. B. Brecht (1964) *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*, ed. and trans. John Willett (London: Methuen), p. 187.
20. R. Hayman (1977) *Artaud and After* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 89. Hayman quotes a description by Anaïs Nin of the reading which Artaud gave, 6 April 1933.
21. K. Čapek (1999) 'The White Plague', *Four Plays*, trans. P. Majer and C. Porter (London: Methuen), p. 266.
22. Healy, *Fictions of Disease in early Modern England*, p. 21.
23. See S. L. Gilman (1988) *Disease and Representation: Images of Illness from Madness to AIDS* (London: Cornell University Press), especially the chapter 'Seeing the AIDS Patient', pp. 245–72.
24. A. Camus (1958) 'State of Siege', *Caligula and Three Other Plays*, trans. S. Gilbert (New York: Vintage Books), p. 164. Where in the French, A. Camus (1962) *Théâtre, Récits Nouvelles*, ed. R. Quilliot (Paris: Gallimard), given after the translation.
25. For an elaboration of the 'warning to beware', see Healy, 'Defoe's *Journal* and the English Plague Writing Tradition', pp. 25–45.

26. See B. R. Bradbrook (1998) *Karel Čapek: In Pursuit of Truth, Tolerance, and Trust* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press), p. 20.
27. M. Douglas (1996) *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London and New York: Routledge), p. 116.
28. H.-U. Thamer (1996) 'The Orchestration of the National Community: The Nuremberg Party Rallies of the NSDAP', in G. Berghaus (ed.) *Fascism and Theatre: Comparative Studies on the Aesthetics and Politics of Performance in Europe, 1925–1945* (Oxford: Berghahn Books), p. 172.
29. C. Spreen (2004) 'Resisting the Plague: The French Reactionary Right and Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty', *Modern Language Quarterly*, 64.1, p. 95.
30. T. Adorno (2002) *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life*, trans. E. F. N. Jephcott (London: Verso), p. 144.
31. W. Reich (1997) *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*, ed. M. Higgins and C. M. Raphael (London: Souvenir Press (E&A) Ltd), p. 315. For a more sustained elaboration and critique of Reich's work in *The Mass Psychology* see Chapter 5, which specifically discusses Reich's inversion of Hitler's rhetoric and proposes the contemporary relevance of plague for thinking about political irrationalism.
32. Reich highlights Hitler's obsession with the health of the body of the German people, quoting a section of *Mein Kampf* that specifically links syphilis, a 'frightful plague,' to the 'Jewification of our spiritual life and mammonization of our mating instinct'. Reich, *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*, p. 81.
33. See J. Dresler (1964) 'Čapek and Communism' in M. Rechcigl (ed.) *The Czechoslovak Contribution to World Culture* (London and The Hague: Mouton and Company), pp. 69–70.
34. Dresler, 'Čapek and Communism', p. 71.
35. J. Derrida (1992) 'The Rhetoric of Drugs', *Points … Interviews, 1974–1994*, ed. E. Weber, trans. P. Kamuf et al. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press), p. 254.
36. For an account of agitprop theatre in Germany in the 1920s and 1930s, and its crossover with more professional performances such as those of Brecht, see R. Bodek (1997) *Proletarian Performance in Weimer Berlin: Agitprop, Chorus, and Brecht* (Columbia: Camden House). See especially 'Agitprop Theatre in the Working Class World', pp. 80–93, 'We are the Red Megaphone! Agitprop Theatre on the Proletarian Stage', pp. 94–136, and 'Bertolt Brecht's Agitprop and the Circulation of Ideas in the Late Republic', pp. 137–58.
37. L. Kramer (2000) 'About the Production', *The Normal Heart and The Destiny of Me* (New York: Grove Press), pp. 13–16.
38. Kramer, *The Normal Heart and The Destiny of Me*, p. 29 and then p. 41 and p. 96. W. M. Hoffman (1990) *As Is* (New York: Dramatists Play Service Inc), p. 17 and p. 20. The better-known but later play *Angels in America* (1992–93) uses plague in a similar way to Kramer and Hoffman; see T. Kushner (2007) *Angels in America: Parts One and Two* (London: Nick Hern Books). Also see the poems of AIDS deaths by R. Boucheron (1985) *Epitaphs for the Plague Dead* (New York: Ursus Press) and T. Gunn (1993) 'In Time of Plague', *Collected Poems* (London and Boston: Faber and Faber), pp. 463–4. Additionally see a diary-memoir of the AIDS outbreak and its early impact upon the US gay community by Randy Shilts (1987) *And the Band Played On: Politics, People, and the Epidemic* (New York: St. Martin's Press). Shilts prefaces many of his

chapters with quotations from Camus's *The Plague*. Laurel Brodsley has argued that Shilts's decision for the book to be structured as a diary-memoir owes much to the influence of Daniel Defoe's *A Journal of the Plague Year*. See L. Brodsley (1992) 'Defoe's *The Journal of the Plague Year*: A Model for Stories of Plague', in E. S. Nelson (ed.) *AIDS: The Literary Response* (New York: Twayne Publishers), pp. 11–22.

39. For references to the AIDS victims as similar to the Holocaust victims, see Kramer, *The Normal Heart and The Destiny of Me*, pp. 39–40 and p. 42. Quotations were given on the theatre walls which likened New York's response to AIDS to the cautious and passive American Jewish reactions to news of Hitler's concentration camps, pp. 15–16. Kramer went on to write Kramer (1989) *Reports from the Holocaust: The Making of an AIDS Activist* (New York: St. Martin's Press). Joel Shatzky, 'AIDS Enters the American Stage', *AIDS: The Literary Response*, p. 134.
40. See A. Bermel (1977) *Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty* (New York: Taplinger Publishing Company), especially Chapter 8, 'Actor and Director', pp. 79–88; and S. Barber (1993) *Antonin Artaud: Blows and Bombs* (London: Faber and Faber), Chapter 2, 'The Theatre of Cruelty', pp. 43–72, for accounts of the vicissitudes of these productions.
41. J. Derrida (1978) 'The Theatre of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation', *Writing and Difference*, trans. A. Bass (London: Routledge), p. 245.
42. The ancient Greek word *pharmakon* means 'drug' and 'poison' simultaneously. It is related to the Greek word *pharmakos*, the ambivalent sacrificial victim during a Greek plague outbreak who takes the role of carrying the disease outside of the city and secures its cessation through their death. For the importance of this word in *Legacies of Plague*, see the 'Introduction' and Chapter 3. See also Derrida's discussion of both terms in J. Derrida (2004) *Dissemination*, trans. B. Johnson (London and New York: Continuum Books), pp. 98–134.

3 Oedipus the *Pharmakos* and the Psychoanalytic Plague

1. R. Crawfurd (1914) *Plague and Pestilence in Literature and Art* (Oxford: Clarendon Press), p. 156. Where clear, page numbers appear parenthetically throughout, after the first citation.
2. Crawfurd, *Plague and Pestilence*, p. 122. Also: R. Girard (1986) *The Scapegoat*, trans. Y. Freccero (London: The Athlone Press), pp. 45–6.
3. Philip Ziegler (2003) *The Black Death* (Gloucestershire: Sutton Publishing), pp. 80–1.
4. See the opening lines of Homer (1965) *The Illiad*, trans. E. V. Rieu (London: Penguin), pp. 23–45, where Apollo brings plague with his arrows for the offence caused to his priest, and it is to Apollo that recompense has to be made to ensure the cessation of plague. See also Crawfurd, *Plague and Pestilence*, p. 22 and p. 50; J. Harrison (1959) *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion* (New York: Meridian Books), p. 103; Girard, *The Scapegoat*, p. 46 and p. 59; and W. K. C. Guthrie (1950) *The Greeks and Their Gods* (London: Methuen and Co Ltd), p. 190.
5. Crawfurd, *Plague and Pestilence*, p. 50.

6. Crawfurd makes mention of these images, *Plague and Pestilence*, pp. 136–7. A more extended discussion is undertaken in L. Marshall (1994) 'Manipulating the Sacred: Image and Plague in Renaissance Italy', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 47.3, pp. 485–532. Photographs of these highly ambivalent images of plague Madonnas and also representations of plague Saints (Saint Sebastian and Saint Roch) are reproduced in B. Wisch (ed.) (2000) *Confraternities and the Visual Arts in Renaissance Italy: Ritual, Spectacle, Image* (New York: Cambridge University Press). See in particular the paintings *Plague Madonna della Misericordia* by Barnaba Da Modena (1370s), p. 22, and Benedetto Bonfigli's *Plague Madonna della Misericordia* (1464), p. 25. Bonfigli's painting is reproduced in *Legacies of Plague* in Figure 3.1. For plates and a good account of the role of art in Italy during the Black Death see: S. K. Cohn, Jr. (1992) 'Part III: Art', *The Cult of Remembrance and the Black Death: Six Renaissance Cities in Central Italy* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press), pp. 203–80.
7. D. Defoe (1969) *A Journal of the Plague Year*, ed. L. Landa (London: Oxford University Press), p. 193 and p. 244–5 respectively.
8. J. G. Frazer (1936) *The Golden Bough: The Scapegoat* (London: Macmillan), p. 253. Although *The Golden Bough* was originally a two-volume edition published in 1890, Frazer extended the study into 13 volumes. The separate *Scapegoat* volume was published in 1913.
9. Harrison, *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion*, pp. 97–9.
10. Interestingly, the name Placet carries its own ambivalent double meanings: in French it is a petition; in the English University tradition, it is the Latin response to a petition, expressing approval. A similar usage appears in the legal terms placitum, a plea, and placit, a decree.
11. J. Derrida (2004) 'Plato's Pharmacy', *Dissemination*, trans. B. Johnson (London and New York: Continuum), p. 130.
12. Although the conditions for plague could potentially be generated anywhere with poor sanitation and where humans and animals live in close and unmonitored conditions, there is a prevailing tendency to view it as coming from somewhere else. This was what happened on the BBC Radio 4 programme *In Our Time* (12 December 2002) where a panel chaired by Melvyn Bragg discussed 'Man and Disease' and consistently described plague in terms of originating elsewhere. See the BBC Radio 4 website archive for *In Our Time*, http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/history/inourtime/inourtime_20021212.shtml, accessed 12 July 2004.
13. N. Frye (1990) *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press), p. 41. Derrida notes this section of Frye in a footnote, *Dissemination*, p. 181, fn. 59.
14. Crawfurd, *Plague and Pestilence*, p. 22; R. D. Griffith (1993) 'Oedipus Pharmakos? Alleged Scapegoating in Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*', *Phoenix*, 47.2, p. 107.
15. Sophocles (1984) 'Oedipus the King', *The Three Theban Plays*, trans. R. Fagles (London: Penguin Books), line 16. Parenthetic references refer to line numbers.
16. For detailed descriptions of Thargelia and how it came to incorporate the *pharmakos* ritual, see Frazer, *The Golden Bough: The Scapegoat*, p. 255; Harrison, *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion*, pp. 77–106. The

Thargelia ritual happened in spring and is also discussed in J.-P. Vernant (1978) 'Ambiguity and Reversal: On the Enigmatic Structure of *Oedipus Rex*', *New Literary History*, 9.3, pp. 475–502.

17. R. D. Griffith disputes this reading, claiming Oedipus is neither scapegoat nor *pharmakos* and underplaying the importance of plague in *Oedipus the King* because, he rightly asserts, it is not part of the traditional myth from where Sophocles took his material. However, it is this very fact that makes plague so notable. In addition, Griffith's argument that to emphasise plague and the *pharmakos* is to undermine the actions of Apollo in the drama takes no account of Apollo's traditional connection with pestilence for the ancient Greeks. See R. Drew Griffith, 'Oedipus Pharmakos?', pp. 95–114. Pietro Pucci raises a different point when he notes that the ending of *Oedipus the King*, where Oedipus re-enters the house of Thebes, is not in keeping with the exile the *pharmakos* ritual demands and that Oedipus begs of Creon ('[d]rive me out of Thebes, in exile' (1666)). Pucci does not dispute the play's allusion to the ritual but argues that the tragedy of Oedipus' destiny is not given closure in *Oedipus the King*, but instead waits until the later exile play, *Oedipus at Colonus*. See P. Pucci (1990) 'The Tragic *pharmakos* of the *Oedipus Rex*', *Helios*, 17.1, p. 49.
18. Vernant, 'Ambiguity and Reversal', pp. 480–1.
19. R. Girard (1973–4) 'The Plague in Literature and Myth', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 15.5, pp. 840–1.
20. Although Girard demonstrates that this constellation of four elements is present in *Oedipus the King* and while he gives further examples in his article, it is not the case that these are present in *all* plague narratives: it would be difficult to establish, for example, how mimetic doubling or a central scapegoat figure exist in Defoe's *A Journal of the Plague Year*.
21. For the first mention of the scapegoat in the Bible, see Leviticus 16:8. Chapter 16 outlines the Law of Atonement and the sacrifices it entails. The *Oxford English Dictionary* notes that 'scapegoat' is the translation chosen by William Tindale in 1530 for the name *Azazel* (literally 'goat of removal'), occurring only in Leviticus 16:8, 10 and 26. 'Scapegoat' was retained by most subsequent translators. See J. A. Simpson and E. S. C. Weiner (comps) (1989) *The Oxford English Dictionary, Volume XIV: Rob-Sequyle*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Clarendon Press), p. 582.
22. Girard, 'The Plague in Literature and Myth', p. 845.
23. There is a brief mention in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, where in summarising Sophocles' play, Freud notes how *Oedipus the King* begins with the plague that prompts an enquiry of the oracle. See S. Freud (1991) *The Interpretation of Dreams*, *PFL Vol. IV*, ed. and trans. James Strachey (London: Penguin), p. 363.
24. Quoted in T. Szasz (1976) *Karl Kraus and the Soul-Doctors: A Pioneer Critic and His Criticism of Psychiatry and Psychoanalysis* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press), p. 103. The comment was originally made in Kraus' newspaper, *Die Fackel*, in 1913.
25. J. Lacan (2001) 'The Freudian Thing', *Écrits: A Selection*, trans. A. Sheridan (London and New York: Routledge), p. 128.
26. As far as I can find, there is no mention of Freud's remark in Jung's correspondence or his writings on Freud.

27. This defence of the 'real' cure of psychoanalysis is repeated by Jacques-Alain Miller in his response to the book, written by cognitive behavioural therapists and edited by C. Meyer (ed.) (2005) *Le Livre noire de la psychanalyse* (Paris: Les Arènes, 2005). Alain-Miller asserts that psychoanalysis should not and need not submit to scientific evaluations of effectiveness, and that cognitive behavioural therapies superficially eliminate the symptom without addressing the root cause. See E. Lanez (22 September 2005) 'Jacques-Alain Miller répond aux anti-Freud', *Le Point*, p. 80. Reproduced in English as 'Response to the Anti-Freudians' and translated by J. Richards at www.lacan.com, http://www.lacan.com/antimill.htm, accessed 10 March 2006.
28. The concept of 'wild' psychoanalysts is Freud's own. See S. Freud (1959) 'Observations on "Wild" Psychoanalysis' (1910), *Collected Papers*, *Vol. II*, trans. J. Riviere (New York: Basic Books Inc.), pp. 297–304.
29. Suggestion plays an important role in psychoanalysis and partakes of the infectious. For an elaboration of this point in relation to psychoanalytic transference and plague, see Chapter 4; for an exploration of plague, suggestion and hypnosis see Chapter 6. For an in-depth discussion, see M. Borch-Jacobsen (1988) 'The Suggect', *The Freudian Subject*, trans. Catherine Porter (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press), pp. 146–52.
30. See E. Jones (1958) *The Life and Works of Sigmund Freud, Vol. II: Years of Maturity 1901–1919* (London: The Hogarth Press), p. 13; S. Freud and C. G. Jung (1974) *The Freud/Jung Letters*, ed. W. McGuire, trans. R. Manheim and R. F. C. Hull (London: The Hogarth Press and Routledge Kegan Paul), pp. 318–40.
31. Jones, *The Life and Works of Sigmund Freud*, *Vol. II*, p. 62.
32. S. Freud (1966) *On the History of the Psychoanalytic Movement*, trans. J. Riviere, ed. J. Strachey (New York: W. W. Norton & Co), p. 27.
33. Freud and Jung, *The Freud/Jung Letters*, Letter 193 J, p. 319.
34. Freud and Jung, *The Freud/Jung Letters*, Letter 201 F, p. 339.
35. S. Freud (1985) *The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess 1887–1904*, trans. J. M. Masson (London and Massachusetts: The Belknap Press), p. 272.
36. Freud, *The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess 1887–1904*, p. 272.
37. Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, p. 364.
38. Sigmund Freud (2001) 'Totem and Taboo', *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, *Vol. XIII*, ed. and trans. J. Strachey (London: Vintage), p. 156.
39. S. Freud (1940) *Gesammelte Werke Vol. IX: Totem und Tabu* (London: Imago Publishing Company Limited), pp. 30–1. German page numbers will follow their English counterparts, separated by a forward slash. The significance of the verb *übertragen*, to transfer, in relation to notions of plague and infection is discussed in Chapter 4. It is notable here that Freud employs the same word as that which names the 'transference' between analysand and analyst. Thus the same term can name a medical transmission of an illness, a psychical transfer of emotional identification and a social/religious transmission of taboo status.
40. If the power of contagion is uncanny for psychoanalysis, then so is plague and so is the psychoanalytic plague. For an account of the uncanniness of

psychoanalysis, see N. Royle (2003) *The Uncanny* (Manchester: Manchester University Press).

41. For a discussion of how infection and imitation are at work within the crowd, see Sigmund Freud (1991) 'Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego' (1921), *Civilization, Society and Religion*, *PFL Vol. 12*, ed. and trans. J. Strachey (London: Penguin), pp. 91–178. Of especial pertinence is the section discussing the hysterical identification of a group of girls at boarding school who, as a result of 'mental infection', 'catch the [hysterical] fit' of one of their number, p. 136. Borch-Jacobsen demonstrates that Freud's argumentation at this point works to assert the presence of the Oedipus complex in group relations, thereby allowing group psychology to be individual psychology writ large. See Borch-Jacobsen, 'The Primal Band', *The Freudian Subject*, pp. 187–91. These two texts, infection, imitation and the crowd are discussed in more detail in Chapter 6.
42. J. Derrida (1994) *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, trans. P. Kamuf (New York and London: Routledge), p. 34.
43. For a more in-depth discussion of this point, see R. Girard (1995) *Violence and the Sacred*, trans. P. Gregory (London: The Athlone Press), pp. 8–31. In discussing the role of the sacrificial victim, Girard notes: 'The tendency of violence to hurl itself on a surrogate if deprived of its original object can surely be described as a contaminating process' (30). The theory Girard advances in this respect is discussed in Chapter 5.
44. Harrison, *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion*, p. 104.
45. G. Deleuze and F. Guattari (1983) *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. R. Hurley, M. Seem and H. R. Lane (London and New York: Continuum), p. 23.
46. Psychoanalytic transference is a structure based upon infection. See Chapter 4.
47. L. Irigaray (1985) 'The Blind Spot of an Old Dream of Symmetry', *Speculum of the Other Woman*, trans. G. C. Gill (New York: Cornell University Press), pp. 11–242.
48. J. Butler (2000) *Antigone's Claim: Kinship Between Life and Death* (New York: Columbia University Press), p. 23.
49. Butler, *Antigone's Claim*, p. 57. Antigone is, of course, the daughter-sister of Oedipus who makes a short entry into *Oedipus the King* at the end, but features more heavily in *Oedipus at Colonius*, which records Oedipus' exile from Thebes. She was also given her own eponymous Theban play by Sophocles, which was in fact written and performed antecedently despite being chronologically the last in the series of the plays about Oedipus and his descendents. Despite Freud's concentration on Oedipus and *Oedipus the King*, with melancholia an important aspect of *Studies on Hysteria* and given Freud's interest in mourning too, it is intriguing that *Antigone* does not get considered at all in the schemas of psychoanalysis. 'Antigone' was the nickname Freud used for Anna, his daughter. Apart from Butler's book, very little work exists on the potential for psychoanalysis to be thought in relation to *Antigone*, although there is: C. Rooney (1997) 'Clandestine Antigones', *The Oxford Literary Review*, 19.1–2, 47–78. I delivered a paper on the topic, 'Mourning Freud's Forgetfulness or Remembering Antigone', at The University of Kent in 2005.

50. Freud's relationship with his followers is discussed in more detail in Chapters 4 and 5.
51. Writing of Freud and his essay 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle', Derrida notes 'his [Freud's] variable relation to psychoanalysis as science, as practice, as mythology, as literature, as speculation, etc.', in J. Derrida (1987) 'To Speculate – on "Freud"', *The Postcard: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond*, trans. A. Bass (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press), p. 377.

4 Dreaming Plague and Plaguing Dreams: The Teachings of Psychoanalysis

1. The comment is reported by Lacan as told to him by Jung, who accompanied Freud to the US in 1909 on the first trip Freud made to the US to lecture on psychoanalysis. J. Lacan (2001) 'The Freudian Thing', *Écrits: A Selection*, trans. A. Sheridan (London and New York: Routledge), p. 128. This chapter opens by recalling the main conclusions of Chapter 3, where these arguments are established in depth.
2. G. Deleuze and F. Guattari (1983) *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. R. Hurley, M. Seem and H. R. Lane (London and New York: Continuum), p. 278.
3. S. Freud (1953) 'On Dreams', *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Vol. v: 1900–1901*, ed. and trans. J. Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis), p. 642. In German: S. Freud (1942) *Gesammelte Werke II/III Die Traumdeutung, Über den Traum* (London: Imago Publishing), p. 655. This text is used for references to *Die Traumdeutung* [*The Interpretation of Dreams*] as well. Where clear, all page numbers will be given in parenthesis within the text. Where the German or French is provided, the page reference follows its English counterpart, separated by a forward slash.
4. In their turn, these typical dreams lead back to plague: the section of *The Interpretation of Dreams* entitled 'Dreams of the Death of Persons of Whom the Dreamer is Fond' is also where Freud first describes (but does not yet name) the Oedipus complex. As part of this, he gives an account of Sophocles' play and makes mention of the Theban plague. See S. Freud (1991) *The Interpretation of Dreams*, *PFL 4*, ed. and trans. J. Strachey (London: Penguin), p. 363.
5. A. Artaud (1958) 'The Theatre and the Plague', *Theatre and Its Double*, trans. M. C. Richards (New York: Grove Press), p. 18. Where the French is given: A. Artaud (1978) *Oeuvres Complètes IV* (Paris: Gallimard).
6. There is a question of telepathy here, a telepathic communication between plague and man. Freud was interested in the possibilities of telepathy and its potential role in dreams. In a very short comment upon occult dreams, Freud proposes to discuss prophetic dreams, which he repudiates strongly, and telepathic dreams. However, he does not discuss telepathic dreams but instead an incident upon which a fortune-teller predicted a future for a woman which didn't come true. Freud is interested because the numbers and details of the prophecy were not without significance in the woman's life even though the prophecy was incorrect. He suggests that 'a strong wish

on the part of the questioner – the strongest unconscious wish, in fact, of her whole emotional life and the motive force of her impending neurosis – had made itself manifest to the fortune-teller by being directly transferred to him while his attention was being distracted by the performances he was going through', S. Freud (1961) 'Some Additional Notes on Dream Interpretation as a Whole', *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Vol. XIV: 1923–1925*, ed. and trans. J. Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute for Psycho-Analysis), p. 138. Interestingly, in the light of the discussion to come, Freud calls this 'thought-transference', p. 138. Freud's attempt to banish prophetic dreams brings him back to the (future orientated) wish and a scene of prophecy and infectious transference. Discussing Freud on dreams and telepathy, Derrida comments, 'in its purity, the concept of telepathic dream appeals to the perception of something external with regard to which psychic life would behave in a "receptive and passive" manner', in J. Derrida (2000) '"Telepathy"', trans. N. Royle in M. McQuillan (ed.) *Deconstruction: A Reader* (New York: Routledge), p. 518.

7. J.-N. Biraben (1975) *Les Hommes et la Peste en France et dans les Pays Européens et Méditerranéens*: *Tome I* (Paris: Mouton), pp. 233–5.
8. Hélène Cixous seems to recognise the possibility of psychic infection in dreams when she writes 'dreams have brought me news of a few virosignifiers', in H. Cixous (2004) 'The Unforseeable', *The Oxford Literary Review*, 26, p. 178.
9. This is again asserted in the short paper, 'Some Additional Notes on Dream Interpretation as a Whole' and implied in the even shorter 'A Premonitory Dream Fulfilled'. The latter attempts, in a rather convoluted way, to show that what a patient deemed a prophetic dream was in fact the resurfacing of a wish from her past; nothing, Freud is sure, but a wish fulfillment which had disguised itself and been retrospectively identified as prophetic. See S. Freud (1953) 'A Premonitory Dream Fulfilled', *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Vol. V: 1900–1901*, ed. and trans. J. Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis), pp. 623–5.
10. I thank Susanne Sklepek for assisting with my German translation throughout this chapter.
11. David Wills (1995) *Prosthesis* (Stamford, CA: Stamford University Press), p. 116.
12. Jean Laplanche and Jean-Bertrand Pontalis, in their authoritative guide to the terminology of psychoanalysis, note that Freud uses *Wunsch* more frequently than the terms *Begierde* or *Lust*, which evoke 'the notion of desire'. J. Laplanche and J.-B. Pontalis (1988) *The Language of Psychoanalysis*, trans. D. Nicholson-Smith (London: Karnac Books), p. 482. The whole problem of transference from one language to another is raised by this little grouping. In English there is an obvious difference in nuance and usage between 'desire' and 'lust' but they both share a sexual connotation, whereas 'wish' usually does not. In French, Laplanche and Pontalis's language, there is only *désir*, since 'wish' does not have a cognate.
13. Maud Ellmann makes a similar point in her introduction to the collection of essays entitled *Psychoanalytic Literary Criticism*: 'Yet Freud came to realise that a gut resistance to psychoanalysis often signified a deeper recognition

of its dangers than a prompt assimilation of its principles. A little indigestion was a healthy sign', M. Ellmann (ed.) (1994) *Psychoanalytic Literary Criticism* (London and New York: Longman), p. 1. She goes on to observe that Freud extended this to his whole oeuvre: 'Freud tended to regard all criticism of his theories as a symptom of resistance to unwelcome truths', p. 2.

14. The dictionary was begun by the Grimm brothers in 1838 but not fully completed until 1960.
15. Freud, 'On Dreams', p. 650.
16. Strachey's translation renders this clause: 'in complete contrast to the desires which were now plaguing me in my dreams', p. 297. The slight difference in tense, coupled with the insertion 'now', loses the sense of a repeated and continual activity which the original German carries.
17. E. Jones (1954) *The Life and Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume I: The Young Freud, 1856–1900* (London: The Hogarth Press), p. 86.
18. A more literal translation renders this: 'One should never let anything escape from oneself, take what one can get even if a small wrong is done alongside; one should miss no opportunity: life is so short and death is inevitable' [*Man soll sich nichts entgehen lassen, nehmen, was man haben kann, auch wenn ein kleines Unrecht dabei mitläuft; man soll keine Gelegenheit versäumen, das Leben ist so kurz, der Tod unvermeidlich*, p. 213].
19. See S. Freud (1990) 'Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming', *Art and Literature, PFL Vol.14*, ed. and trans. J. Strachey (London: Penguin Books), p. 134, where Freud links playing to phantasy and then to dreaming, stating of the underlying wishes: 'These motivating wishes vary according to the sex, character and circumstances of the person who is having the phantasy; but they fall naturally into two groups. They are either ambitious wishes, which serve to elevate the subject's personality; or they are erotic ones.'
20. Translations of these lines vary. David Luke translates them as: 'Suck on at Wisdom's breasts, you'll find / She daily grows more sweet and kind' in J. W. von Goethe (1987) *Faust Part One*, trans. D. Luke (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 57. An earlier translation renders them as: 'So you will suck the breasts of learning / With rising appetite and yearning', in J. W. von Goethe (1976) *Faust Part One*, trans. W. Arndt (New York: W. W. Norton and Company), p. 45. A more literal rendition would be: 'So with every day that passes / you will lust more and more after the breasts of wisdom.' My thanks to Keston Sutherland for assistance with this couplet.
21. N. Hertz (1985) *The End of the Line: Essays on Psychoanalysis and the Sublime* (New York: Columbia University Press), p. 149.
22. J. Derrida (1987) 'To Speculate – "On Freud"', *The Postcard: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond*, trans. A. Bass (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press), p. 339.
23. C. Bollas (1995) *Cracking Up: The Work of Unconscious Experience* (London: Routledge), p. 11.
24. Freud, of course, maintained that the dream work, which Bollas believes is the model for all unconscious activity, does not think: 'It [the dream work] does not think, calculate or judge in any way at all; it restricts itself to giving things a new form', Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, p. 650. Nevertheless, Freud does allow that dreams themselves 'are a particular *form* of thinking', Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, p. 650. The basic problem

with Bollas's theory here for strict Freudians is the looseness with which he appropriates and deploys psychoanalytic terms: 'dream' is something the analyst can do while awake and listening with concentration; 'unconscious thinking' appears to be accessible, and in quite coherent ways, to conscious thought.

5 Plague, Jews and Fascist Anti-Semites: 'The Great Incurable Malady'

1. Susan Sontag (1988) *Illness as Metaphor* (London: Penguin), pp. 41–2.
2. The expression is Freud's own, although written as a negative proscription: 'Certainly there are great differences between the Jewish and Aryan spirit. We can observe that everyday. Hence there would be here and there differences in outlook on life and art. But there should be no such thing as Aryan or Jewish science.' Quoted in Y. H. Yerushalmi (1991) *Freud's Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press), p. 43. Freud wrote this in a letter to another Jewish analyst, Sandor Ferenczi, on 8 June 1913. Even a prohibition on a 'Jewish science' betrays an awareness of possible accusations: Freud was advising Ferenczi how to respond to a Swiss psychiatrist who had proposed that differences in scientific approach between the Swiss and Viennese was due to one being Aryan, the other Jewish. Also in this respect, compare the excerpt from Freud's letter just quoted with Jung's suggestion of Aryan and Jewish difference quoted later in this chapter.
3. James Shapiro (2000) *Oberammergau: The Troubling Story of the World's Most Famous Passion Play* (London: Little, Brown and Company), pp. 102–3. Further references for this and all sources after the first citation will be given in the text, where clear.
4. Adolf Hitler (1973) *Hitler's Table Talk 1941–44: His Private Conversations*, 2nd edn, trans. N. Cameron and R. H. Stevens (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson), p. 563.
5. To trace the extent of the Jewish opposition in all its intricacies see the chapter 'Next Year in Jerusalem' in Shapiro, *Oberammergau*, pp. 3–43.
6. For a useful summary of negative depictions of the Jews in Christian iconography and theology, in particular the changing tone of the gospels towards the culpability of the Jews in Jesus' crucifixion, see M. Lazar (1991) 'The Lamb and the Scapegoat: The Dehumanization of the Jews in Medieval Propaganda Imagery', in S. L. Gilman and S. T. Katz (eds) *Anti-Semitism in Times of Crisis* (New York and London: New York University Press), pp. 38–80. For a much more detailed exposition of the shifting positions of the early evangelical church in relation to the crucifixion and to Jewish identity, see Elaine Pagels (1995) *The Origin of Satan* (New York: Vintage Books).
7. W. Naphy and A. Spicer (2000) *The Black Death and the History of Plagues, 1345–1730* (Gloucestershire: Tempus Publishing Ltd), pp. 67–8. Naphy and Spicer identify a scapegoating at work in these pogroms and this will be examined in more detail later in relation to the Jews and Nazi anti-Semitism. See also R. Gay (1992) *The Jews of Germany: A Historical Portrait* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press), p. 28; P. Ziegler (2003) 'Germany:

The Flagellants and the Persecution of the Jews', *The Black Death* (Gloucestershire: Sutton Publishing), pp. 65–85.

8. M. Luther (1971) 'On the Jews and Their Lies', *Luther's Works, Vol. 47: The Christian in Society IV*, ed. F. Sherman, trans. M. H. Bertram (Philadelphia: Fortress Press), p. 265. Also see, '[The Jews] are our plague, our pestilence, and our misfortune', p. 275. There are numerous references throughout to the Jews as well-poisoners. For a discussion of Luther's writings on the Jews, see R. Marius (1999) 'On the Jews', *Martin Luther: The Christian Between God and Death* (London and Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press), pp. 372–80.
9. S. L. Gilman (1991) *The Jew's Body* (New York and London: Routledge), p. 96.
10. Adolf Hitler (1974) *Mein Kampf*, trans. R. Manheim (London: Hutchinson & Co Ltd). Unless specified, the following Hitler quotations are all taken from this work.
11. M. Ellmann (2004) 'Writing like a Rat', *Critical Quarterly*, 46.4, p. 61.
12. J. P. Stern (1990) *Hitler: The Führer and the People* (London: Fontana Press), p. 185. First published in 1975.
13. Adolf Hitler (1942) *Hitler's Speeches 1922–1939*: *Vol. I*, ed. and trans. N. H. Baynes (London, New York and Toronto: Oxford University Press), p. 727. Further references to this text will be distinguished by being preceded with an 'S'. For a discussion of Hitler's anti-Semitism as expressed in laws as opposed to public rhetoric once he held power, see David Welch (1993) *The Third Reich: Politics and Propaganda* (London and New York: Routledge), p. 80.
14. S. Freud (2001), 'Moses and Monotheism', *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, *Vol. XXIII*, ed. and trans. J. Strachey (London: Vintage), p. 106.
15. Welch, *The Third Reich*, p. 47.
16. Welch, *The Third Reich*, p. 79.
17. Quoted in David Welch (1983) *Propaganda and the German Cinema, 1933–1945* (Oxford: Clarendon Press), p. 294. For a good summary and account of the film, see pp. 292–306.
18. Ellmann, 'Writing like a Rat', p. 59.
19. Quoted in Welch, *Propaganda and the German Cinema*, p. 295.
20. Welch, *Propaganda and the German Cinema*, p. 295.
21. There are at least two points where a breach in the message of the film opens up. Firstly, the sheer quantity of examples provided of influential Jews in German life, which are given to ostensibly demonstrate their insidious infestation, also gives the impression that their contributions to the cultural and financial prosperity and development of Germany have been significant and successful. Secondly, the manipulation of the Jews by the Nazi film-makers at times reveals itself very transparently: at one point Jewish men are shown in Orthodox dress, assembled in a smiling row; this image is then displaced by another of the same men, but in 'Westernised' dress and fully shaved, in an attempt to show how deviously they blend in. However, the question of agency becomes plangent: the film inadvertently allows the viewer to ask how and with what means these Orthodox men were convinced to participate in such a demonstration.
22. R. Girard (1995) *Violence and the Sacred*, trans. P. Gregory (London: The Athlone Press), p. 49. The discussion of the crisis is elaborated in pp. 49–57.

It is worth recalling, vis-à-vis the discussion of taboo in Chapter 3, that what is sacred is also taboo and thus contagious.

23. J. Derrida (2005) *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason*, trans. P.-A. Brault and M. Naas (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press), p. 90.
24. Many autoimmune diseases and illnesses are difficult to treat and their aetiology is hard to establish. However, there are some situations in which science deliberately suppresses the autoimmune impulse of the body through drugs, such as when transplant patients run the risk of rejecting the new organ.
25. We can see the contemporary playing out of this dynamic in the rhetoric surrounding the problem posed by recent fears regarding British terrorists: in 2006, for example, the government was at pains to stress that, firstly, any links between terrorist acts or alleged terrorist plots and Britain's foreign policy in the Middle East was beside the point and, at the same time, they implicitly disavowed the 'Britishness' of alleged terrorists by forcing responsibility for their radicalisation onto the 'Muslim community'.
26. Jean-Paul Sartre (1970) *Anti-Semite and Jew*, trans. G. J. Becker (New York: Schocken Books), p. 28.
27. W. Reich (1997) *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*, ed. M. Higgins and C. M. Raphael, trans. V. R. Carfagno (London: Souvenir Press). Reich uses the phrase throughout. He is not the only one to call Nazi fascism a plague. The French journalist Daniel Guérin used the epithet to name the published journal of his journeys through Germany during the Weimar period and then during the early stages of Nazi power. See Daniel Guérin (1994) *The Brown Plague: Travels in Late Weimar and Early Nazi Germany*, trans. R. Schwartzwald (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press).
28. C. Wilson (1981) *The Quest for Wilhelm Reich* (London and New York: Granada), p. 23. Further references will be preceded by 'W' to distinguish them from other sources.
29. Admittedly, Wilson has gained this information from Reich's interviews. See W. Reich (1975) *Wilhelm Reich Speaks of Freud*, ed. M. Higgins, trans. T. Pol (London: Penguin Books), p. 48. Further references to appear in the text preceded by 'R'.
30. E. Jones (1957) *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud, Vol. III: The Last Phase, 1919–1939* (London: The Hogarth Press), pp. 177–8, p. 204 and p. 369.
31. Reich's theory of the existence of 'orgone energy', a sort of life force which he believed was present in all life forms, was part of the later trajectory of his work. He believed he had discovered this and could measure it scientifically. His sale of orgone measuring boxes was eventually what caused his arrest and incarceration. An interest in miasmas or energy forces is apparent in the work of others who have written on plague, probably due to the link with the miasma theory of plague dissemination which prevailed up until the twentieth-century. There is a certain affinity between Reich's theory of orgone energy and the 'absolute' miasma in Karel Čapek's 1922 satirical novel. See K. Čapek (1927) *The Absolute at Large* (London: Macmillan), wherein a box of energy emits powerful and invisible 'waves' or a 'miasma' which infects those nearby with a zealous theology. Čapek's play *The White Plague* was discussed in detail in Chapter 2. The plague in William Burroughs' *Cities of the Red Night* is also miasmic, or at least a form of radiation infection,

and Reich is mentioned in the early pages when a medical expert is explaining the symptoms of the disease. W. Burroughs (1981) *Cities of the Red Night* (London: Picador), pp. 34–5.

32. A. Lingis (1994) *The Community of Those Who Have Nothing in Common* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press), p. 60.
33. W. Shakespeare, 'Romeo and Juliet', (III, i, lines 91, 99, 106) in G. Blakemore Evans (1997) *The Riverside Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, 2nd edn (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company), p. 1121.
34. See S. Kierkegaard (1989) *The Sickness Unto Death* [1849], trans. A. Hannay (London: Penguin Books), p. 33–58 and F. Nietzsche (1996) *On the Genealogy of Morals* [1887], trans. D. Smith (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press). See in particular the third essay, 'What is the Meaning of Ascetic Ideals?', p. 77–136, especially sections 9, 14, 15 and 21.
35. T. Adorno (2002) *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life*, trans. E. F. N. Jephcott (London and New York: Verso), p. 73.
36. For Derrida's discussion, see J. Derrida, 'Plato's Pharmacy' (2004) *Dissemination*, trans. B. Johnson (London and New York: Continuum), pp. 67–186. The significance of Derrida's reading here in relation to plague has already been discussed in Chapter 3.
37. D. Defoe (1969) *A Journal of the Plague Year*, ed. L. Landa (London: Oxford University Press), p. 235.
38. P. Roazen (1967) *Freud and His Followers* (London: Penguin Books), p. 310.
39. One of Reich's more bizarre names for the pestilent character is 'Modju', which he writes of sometimes as though it were a supernatural entity akin to the devil and at others as though it is the person himself. The name is a compound from the names Mocenigo, who delivered Giordano Bruno over to the Inquisition, and 'dju', taken from Stalin's name, Djugashvili. Reich explains to Eissler in the interviews: '"Modju" is a synonym for the emotional plague or pestilent character who uses underhand slander and defamation in his fight against life and truth', *Wilhelm Reich Speaks of Freud*, p. 31.
40. Interestingly, both Federn and Fenichel had socialist interests and so could have been among those most sympathetic to Reich's attempts to blend Marxism and psychoanalysis. Instead they were perceived as threats.
41. Quoted in D. Bakan (1990) *Sigmund Freud and the Jewish Mystical Tradition* (London: Free Association Books), p. 58.
42. In a letter dated 3 May 1908, Freud wrote to Karl Abraham of Jung, 'I nearly said that it was only by his appearance on the scene that psycho-analysis escaped the danger of becoming a Jewish national affair [*eine jüdisch nationale Angelegenheit*]'. Quoted in Yerushalmi, *Freud's Moses*, p. 42.
43. Sigmund Freud (1993) 'The Resistances to Psychoanalysis', *Historical and Expository Works on Psychoanalysis, PFL Vol. 15*, ed. and trans. J. Strachey (London: Penguin), p. 273. Freud continues: 'Nor is it perhaps entirely a matter of chance that the first advocate of psychoanalysis was a Jew. To profess belief in this new theory called for a certain degree of readiness to accept a situation of solitary opposition – a situation with which no one is more familiar than the Jew', p. 273.
44. For the relationships and fallout of the two men see Roazen, 'The "Crown Prince": Carl Gustav Jung', *Freud and His Followers*, pp. 235–303.

45. Quoted in Yerushalmi, *Freud's Moses*, p. 49.
46. It is pertinent, in relation to the time period under discussion, that a first draft of what would become 'Moses and Monotheism' was apparently completed by Freud in 1934, but he delayed publication due to the political climate and the fragile protection which, in the Prefatory Note to the third part of the essay, he admits had been granted him by the Catholic Church. Parts 1 and 2 of the essay were first published in 1937 and the whole thing in 1939. See James Strachey's 'Editor's Note' to the publication already cited, pp. 3–5.
47. H. Heine (1982) *The Complete Poems of Heinrich Heine*, trans. H. Draper (Boston: Shrkamp/Insel), p. 399. In the German: H. Heine (1962) *Werke*, ed. M. Greiner (Berlin: Kiepenheuer und Witsch), p. 289.
48. Sigmund Freud (1961) *Letters of Sigmund Freud, 1873–1939*, ed. E. L. Freud, trans. T. Stern and J. Stern (London: The Hogarth Press), p. 415.
49. William Shakespeare, 'Romeo and Juliet', (III, i, lines 91, 99, 106) in *The Riverside Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, p. 1121.
50. All information relating to Maylan is taken from Yerushalmi.
51. Shakespeare, 'The Tempest' (I.ii, lines 363–4) in *The Riverside Shakespeare*, p. 1666.
52. This can be seen clearly by running an Internet Google search for the two words, which brings up pages of blogs and references which talk of the 'plague of Islamofascism'.

6 Screening Plague Images/Plaguing Screen Images: von Trier's Epidemic and Hypnosis

1. See Jack Stevensen (2002) *Lars von Trier* (London: British Film Institute); Stig Björkman (ed.) (2003) *Trier on von Trier*, trans. N. Smith (London: Faber and Faber); J. Lumholdt (ed.) (2003) *Lars von Trier: Interviews* (Mississippi: University of Mississippi Press).
2. E. Stewart (2005) 'Hypnosis, Identification and Crime in Lars von Trier's European Trilogy', *Film Journal* 1.12, http://www.thefilmjournal.com/, accessed 23 July 2008.
3. Sigmund Freud (1990) 'Creative Writers and Day-dreaming', *Art and Literature, PFL Vol. 14*, ed. and trans. J. Strachey (London: Penguin), p. 138. Where clear all initial references will be given in footnotes and then page numbers will be provided within the text.
4. There is a practice of hypnosis which attempts to exclude suggestion completely. The therapeutic value is supposed to reside in the catalepsy of the hypnotic trance. For a discussion of the therapeutic uses of hypnosis see L. Chertok (1981) 'Therapeutic Applications', *Sense and Nonsense in Psychotherapy: The Challenge of Hypnosis*, trans. R. H. Ahrenfeldt (Oxford: Pergamon Press), pp. 74–9. See also Freud (2001) 'Preface to the Translation of Bernheim's *Suggestion*', *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*: *Vol. 1 (1886–1889)*, ed. and trans. J. Strachey (London: Vintage), pp. 75–85. As Freud discusses, Bernheim believed that hypnotic states were a normal psychological phenomenon, like sleep, and argued that the suggestion so important in hypnosis is also present and affects us in our conscious state.

5. C. Bainbridge (2004) 'Making Waves: Trauma and Ethics in the Work of Lars von Trier', *Journal for Cultural Research*, 8.3, p. 356.
6. In this respect, Carol Bainbridge is not quite correct in stating that '[t]he effect of the hypnosis is to bring the fictional plague into the reality of the writer's world as the female medium of the hypnotic moment contracts the plague herself and infects everyone in the room'. See Bainbridge, 'Making Waves', p. 355.
7. This information is given on the commentary to *Epidemic* provided with the DVD.
8. Björkman, *Trier on von Trier*, p. 95.
9. Interestingly, Lucio Fulci's undead film *City of the Living Dead* (1983) opens with a woman in a trance state in a séance. She sees the suicide of the priest that will open the gates of hell and bring the dead back to life; shaking and crying, she eventually falls down and, presumed dead, certified by doctors, she is buried, only to be rescued from her living tomb by an inquisitive hack who visits her grave.
10. C. Bainbridge (2004) 'The Trauma Debate: Just Looking? Traumatic Affect, Film Form and Spectatorship in the Work of Lars von Trier', *Screen*, 45.4, p. 394.
11. Daniel Defoe (1969) *A Journal of the Plague Year*, ed. L. Landa (London: Oxford University Press), p. 56.
12. On the relationship between film and dream see Christian Metz (1990) 'Part III: The Fiction Film and Its Spectator: A Metapsychological Study', in *Psychoanalysis and Cinema: The Imaginary Signifier* [1977], trans. C. Britton et al. (London: Macmillan Press), pp. 99–148. To contextualise this early and influential account of psychoanalytic film analysis, see V. Lebeau (2001) 'Through the Looking Glass: Mirror/Dream/Screen' in *Psychoanalysis and Cinema: The Play of Shadows* (London: Wallflower Press), pp. 32–60.
13. For plates, and a discussion of the role of photography in the medical categorisation of hysteria, see G. Didi-Huberman (2003) *The Invention of Hysteria: Charcot and the Photographic Iconography of the Salpêtrière*, trans. Alisa Hartz (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press).
14. S. Žižek (1997) *The Plague of Fantasies* (London and New York: Verso), p. 1.
15. Francis Petrarch (2002) *My Secret Book*, trans. J. G. Nichols (London: Hesperus Press Limited), p. 24. Nichols's translation renders the whole line: 'Here comes that horde of phantoms which mangle your thoughts, and with their fatal variety get in the way of those clear meditations through which we rise to the one true light', p. 24. Thus, in this new translation, Nichols loses the use of plague which is present in the Latin and in other translations. The Latin phrase used by Petrarch is '*Hinc pestis illa fantasmatum*'. See the online Latin text, 'Secretum', at Biblioteca Italiana, http://www.bibliotecaitaliana.it:6336/dynaweb/bibit/autori/p/petrarca/secretum/, accessed 25 November 2006.
16. For a more nuanced account by Žižek of the forces and structures at work in our dealings with the 'other', see in particular his writings on the figure of 'the neighbour' in S. Žižek, E. L. Santner and K. Reinhard (2005) *The Neighbour: Three Inquiries in Political Theology*, (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press), pp. 134–90; and for a critique of multiculturalism which is far more detailed than this small section in *The Plague of Fantasies*, see S. Žižek (1997) 'Multiculturalism, or, the Cultural Logic of Multinational Capitalism', *New Left Review* I/225: 28–51.

17. Adorno notes the way in which psychoanalysis is unable to fully repress hypnosis and suggestion (and its element of spectacle, its aura of magic and irrationality) and compares this with cinematic development: 'Suggestion and hypnosis, rejected by psycho-analysis as apocryphal, the charlatan magician masquerading before a fairground booth, reappear within its grandiose system as the silent film does in the Hollywood epic'. T. Adorno (2002) *Minima Moralia*: *Reflections From Damaged Life*, trans. E. F. N. Jephcott (London: Verso), p. 64.
18. H. Münsterberg (2008) *The Photoplay: A Psychological Study* (Marston Gate: Hard Press), p. 65.
19. L. Marcus (2007) *The Tenth Muse: Writing about Cinema in the Modernist Period* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 209.
20. *The British Film Board of Classifications Website* (12 December 2005) 'Student Guide – History: 1916 – T. P. O'Conner', http://www.sbbfc.co.uk/student_guide_history1912.asp, accessed 19 September 2006.
21. *BBC News Website* (1 September 2006) 'Row over Bush TV 'Assassination', http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/entertainment/5302598.stm, accessed 13 November 2006.
22. L. Chertok and I. Stengers (1992) *A Critique of Psychoanalytic Reason: Hypnosis as a Scientific Problem from Lavoisier to Lacan*, trans. Martha Noel Evans (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press), p. 1.
23. See Chapter 3 for a discussion of the *pharmakos* and the punishment of Jean Placet. Recall, also, Doctor Castel in Camus's *The Plague*, who creates a vaccine which only prolongs the pain of the treated child, discussed in Chapter 1.
24. J. Crary (1999) *Suspensions of Perception: Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture* (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press), p. 66 and 71 respectively.
25. For debates about the theory, models and uses of hypnosis, see S. J. Lynn and J. W. Rhue (eds) (1991) *Theories of Hypnosis: Current Models and Perspectives* (New York and London: The Guilford Press); and N. P. Spanos and J. F. Chaves (eds) (1989) *Hypnosis: The Cognitive-Behavioral Perspective* (New York: Prometheus Books). For psychoanalytic approaches and therapies which embrace hypnosis see Chertok, *Sense and Nonsense in Psychotherapy*.
26. Siegfried Kracauer (1961) *Nature of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality* (London: Denis Dobson), p. 160. In 1936, Walter Benjamin noted the potential for film to influence the masses. Benjamin perceived how film could be a powerful propaganda instrument, but hoped that this would be recognised and exploited by the left as well as by fascism. He notes how film and photography are able, in an unprecedented way, to capture mass gatherings such as rallies, parades and war. In the photograph and the film 'the masses are brought face to face with each other'. Walter Benjamin (1999) 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', *Illuminations*, trans. H. Zorn (London: Pimlico), p. 243, n. 21.
27. Sigmund Freud (1991) 'Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego', *Civilization, Society and Religion*, *PFL Vol. 12*, ed. and trans. J. Strachey (London: Penguin), p. 109.
28. See the excellent discussion of Freud's text in M. Borch-Jacobsen (1988) 'The Primal Band', *The Freudian Subject*, trans. C. Porter (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press), pp. 127–242.

29. For the German see Sigmund Freud (1940) 'Massenpsychologie und Ich-Analyse', *Gesammelte Werke XIII* (London: Imago Publishing Co. Ltd), p. 141. Transference, as Chapter 4 discussed, is a concept with a specifically contagious spread throughout the work of Freud, and itself names an infectious structure.
30. In a footnote to 'Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego', Freud writes: 'This situation, in which the subject's attitude is unconsciously directed towards the hypnotist, while he is consciously occupied with monotonous and uninteresting perceptions, finds a parallel among the events of psychoanalytic treatment' (159). This is then illustrated with reference to the moment in therapy when a seeming halt occurs in free association and the patient declares there is nothing in his mind. He is staring at a wall or out of the window and says as much. At this point in the description Freud comments, bringing the situation back to transference, '[t]hen one knows at once that he has gone off into the transference and that he is engaged upon what are still unconscious thoughts relating to the physician' (159). The admission of a block such as this is claimed as the stimulation to its clearance.
31. For other discussions of hypnosis, suggestion and transference see Chertok, *Sense and Nonsense in Psychotherapy* and J.-M. Oughourlian (1991) *The Puppet of Desire: The Psychology of Hysteria, Possession and Hypnosis* (Stanford, CA: Standford University Press), especially the chapter 'Animal Magnetism and Hypnosis', pp. 188–241.
32. Janet Bergstrom (1979) 'Alternation, Segmentation, Hypnosis: Interview with Raymond Bellour', *Camera Obscura*, No. 3–4, p. 101.

7 Plague, Zombies and the Hypnotic Relation: Romero and After

1. The woman, a 'witch' who is blamed for bringing plague and who is burnt as a result, recalls the figure of the *pharmakos*, the ancient Greek sacrifice during plague outbreaks. Scapegoating is mainly discussed in Chapters 3 and 5.
2. Significantly, in relation to the arguments in this and the previous chapter, the first mass contagion of Americans with the disease in *Outbreak* takes place in a movie theatre. The infected man coughs and the camera follows the droplets out into the atmosphere and then down someone else's oesophagus. Within several hours the movie spectators are queuing for admission to the hospital in the first sign of an outbreak. A whole African village has already been destroyed but, within the film's structure and narrative, this is a backdrop that positions the disease as coming from 'elsewhere' and implies its exotic and primitive origin. This allows the film to represent the disease as a form of invasion by the 'other', the African (disease) that invades (white, Caucasian) America. Given the state of race relations in the US, this could be read as an unpleasant figuration of 'return of the repressed'.
3. I. C. Pinedo (1997) *Recreational Terror: Women and the Pleasures of Horror Film Viewing* (New York: State University of New York Press), p. 46.

4. See Sigmund Freud (1990) 'The "Uncanny"' [1919], trans. A. Strachey, *Art and Literature*, *PFL Vol. 14*, ed. J. Stratchey (London: Penguin), pp. 335–76.
5. Pinedo notes that this self-reflexive referencing to other horror movies and novels is typical of the genre. She argues that the 'cannibalization of past productions', which is 'pastiche, the art of plagiarism', has been around in horror movies for a long time and, contra Fredric Jameson, is not necessarily a marker of the postmodern, Piendo, *Recreational Terror*, p. 46. Within plague texts, as seen in Chapter 1, I have termed this cannibalisation a parasitism, and Chapter 4 discusses the relationship between plagiarism and plague.
6. See chapters 3 and 5 for further discussions of Freud, Girard, violence and contagion.
7. Gregory A. Waller (1986) 'Land of the Living Dead', *The Living and the Undead: From Stoker's Dracula to Romero's Dawn of the Dead* (Urbana and Illinois: University of Illinois Press), pp. 272–330.
8. Jonathan Crary (1999) *Suspensions of Perception: Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture* (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press), p. 231.
9. For a reading of *Night of the Living Dead* as a critique of US race relations, see Pinedo, *Recreational Terror*, pp. 113–14.
10. The theatricality of plague and its possibilities for spectacle have already been noted and discussed in Chapter 2.
11. R. H. W. Dillard (1987) '*Night of the Living Dead*: It's Not Just Like a Wind That's Passing Through', in G. A. Waller (ed.) *American Horrors: Essays on the Modern American Horror Film* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press), p. 23 and p. 22 respectively.
12. Sigmund Freud (1991) 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle', in *On Metapsychology*, *PFL Vol. 11*, ed. and trans. J. Strachey (London: Penguin), p. 338. 13.
    Sigmund Freud (1993) 'An Outline of Psychoanalysis', *Historical and Expository Works on Psychoanalysis*, *PFL Vol. 15*, ed. and trans. J. Strachey (London: Penguin), p. 380.
14. P. Hirst and P. Woolley (1982) *Social Relations and Human Attributes* (London and New York: Tavistock Publications), p. 116, n. 2. See also the related discussion 'The Death Drive', in N. Royle (2003) *The Uncanny* (Manchester: Manchester University Press), pp. 84–106.
15. S. Žižek (1997) *The Plague of Fantasies* (London and New York: Verso), p. 89.
16. For a discussion of how Romero's zombie films operate as a critique of US values, including the prevalence of consumerism, see: K. Newman (1988) 'Fun With the Living Dead', *Nightmare Movies: The New Edition. A Critical History of the Horror Movie from 1968* (London: Bloomsbury), pp. 199–210, and R. Humphries (2002) 'George Romero', *The American Horror Film: An Introduction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press), pp. 113–17.
17. Quoted in Waller, *The Living and the Undead*, p. 306.
18. Bub in *Day of the Dead* prefigures them: he is a 'special case' zombie. Under the training of Dr Logan, he begins to explore everyday objects and, when Logan is killed, he has a moment of grief and rage which culminates in him shooting the military commander who had gunned down the doctor. Are zombies telepathic as well as hypnotised? Certainly, Bub's execution of the commander is fortuitous, insofar as he comes upon the man by accident, but diegetically it is the 'fitting' revenge act. Logan is heard on his scientific tapes referring to himself as 'mummy' in relation to his zombies; Bub

is named after Logan's father; and the military commander, as sole male controller, is in the position of the father-figure. If Wordsworth is right and the child is father of the man, in this strange and sick Oedipal triangle the zombie-child kills the father in revenge for the mother's execution!

19. See *10 Downing Street Website* (August 2002) 'Iraq's Weapons of Mass Destruction: The Assessment of the British Government', http://www.pm.gov.uk/files/pdf/iraqdossier.pdf, accessed 28 November 2006.
20. See C. Wills (1997) *Plagues: Their Origins, History and Future* (London: Flamingo), p. 62.
21. L. A. Cole (1997) *The Eleventh Plague: The Politics of Biological and Chemical Warfare* (New York: W. H. Freeman and Company), pp. 156–7.

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